PS3 PlayStation 3 | PSP PlayStation Portable | PlayStation 2

PlayStation®

The Official Magazine

Issue 038 November 2010

ALL NEW LOOK!

CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS
MULTIPLAYER PLAYTEST

PlayStation - The Official Magazine Issue 38 (November 2010)

MOVE LAUNCH GUIDE

WORLD EXCLUSIVE

Twisted Metal

Sweet Tooth returns with a vengeance

BIOSHOCK: INFINITE
New details revealed

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GRAN TURISMO 5 **PS TURNS 15** SMACKDOWN **GOD OF WAR PSP**

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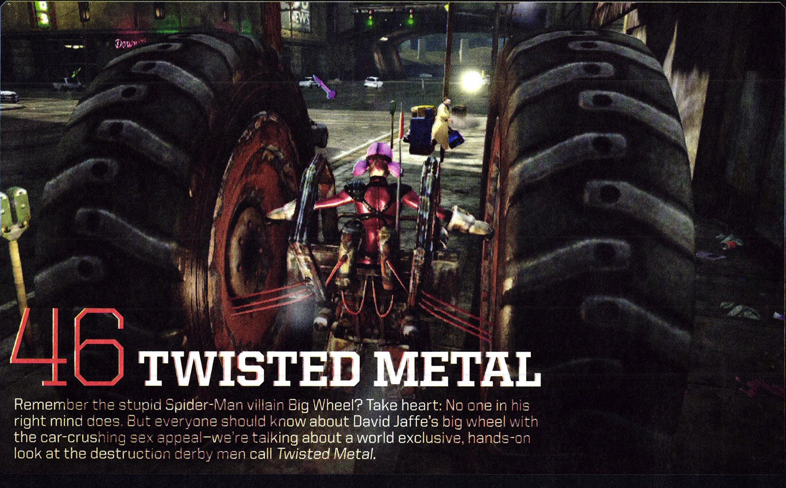
NOVEMBER 2010

COVER FEATURE



46 TWISTED METAL

Remember the stupid Spider-Man villain Big Wheel? Take heart: No one in his right mind does. But everyone should know about David Jaffe's big wheel with the car-crushing sex appeal—we're talking about a world exclusive, hands-on look at the destruction derby men call *Twisted Metal.*

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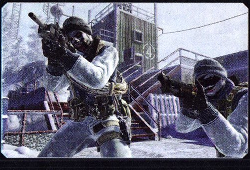

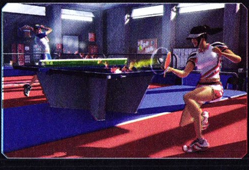

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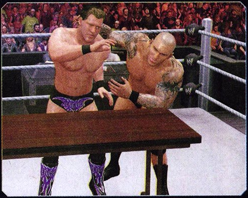

30 WWE SMACKDOWN VS. RAW 2011

This meeting has been tabled. Get it? Hah! Anyway, PTOM lays the smack down on THQ's hot wrestling title. Now with more burly men!

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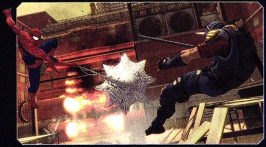
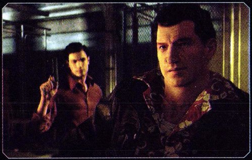


76 SPIDER-MAN: SHATTERED DIMENSIONS

Face front, true believer, as this is action in the mighty Marvel style. (With no Big Wheels.)

26 GRAN TURISMO 5

The race oftentimes goes to the fleet of foot and brave of heart, but they're just speedbumps on the road of life for anyone smart enough to climb behind the wheel of *Gran Turismo 5*.



78 MAFIA II

Life is not all horses' heads and kisses of death. Although it mostly is for Mafiosi.

Rebirth of the Cool

It's a month of new beginnings at PTOM

Every now and then, it's nice to shake things up. To alter the way we do things. To make changes both subtle and radical.

If there's a theme to this issue, it's *change*. Or, to be more precise: change is a very good thing. That's one of the messages we got from my new pals David Jaffe and and Scott Campbell (pictured above) from Eat, Sleep, Play after our whirlwind visit to their Utah studio for our world-exclusive cover story. *Twisted Metal* isn't just the rebirth of the longest-running PlayStation-exclusive franchise, but a change in how we think about multiplayer gaming in the PS3 era. Among the many gems from Jaffe comes my favorite: the curious notion that multiplayer gaming would benefit if players *didn't* get shot to giblets every other second. And after our time playing the game, we couldn't agree more. One of the best aspects of *Twisted Metal* is the ability to linger in its world, to create on-the-fly rivalries, and to survive long enough to actually feel like we're a part of the brilliantly bizarro landscape.

But that's not the only change we're celebrating this issue. We've also got an in-depth feature on *Call of Duty: Black Ops'* game-changing multiplayer modes, along with a PlayStation Move launch guide, showcasing everything that's awesome about SCEA's foray into motion controls.

And then, of course, there's the biggest change of all. This issue marks the first wholesale redesign of PTOM, and it's an effort we're exceedingly proud of. Our goal here: to elevate *our* game, offering the strongest content on every page, celebrating what we love about PlayStation while being a critical voice helping guide you toward what matters. Be sure to tell us what you think. Enjoy!

GARY

Gary Steinman
Editor In Chief
@TinyManRages

Gary Steinman
Editor in Chief

The legends are true: Gary Steinman does not have time to bleed, he gives paper Gary cuts, and that strange burning sensation means his lemur army is on the move.

Greg Orlando
Executive Editor

Frankly, no one is sure what Greg Orlando does at this magazine except rub his hands and prattle on about his doomsday laser. Oh, and he also eats Funyons, which are like onions, only more fun.

Roger Burchill
Managing Editor

Roger Burchill, rockstar poet and keeper of the keys, defends PTOM's virtue by day and, by night, punches evil in its stupid kidney as FistHeart: The Explodenator.

Ken Bousquet
Art Director

Designer extraordinaire Ken Bousquet made this magazine, oh, 118 percent prettier and still had time to push the evil witch into the blender, ensuring the pixies could have their tea party.

Scott Butterworth
Assistant Editor

Plucky editor Scott Butterworth was caller number nine, for which he won the free trip to Awesomeville—of which he is now the mayor and entitled to a free parking spot.

¡El Desconocido!
Man of Mystery

Who is El Desconocido? He could be anyone, anywhere. He could even be you! Or we could just have a space to fill. Either way, he's still pretty mysterious. And a little bit frightening

PlayStation®
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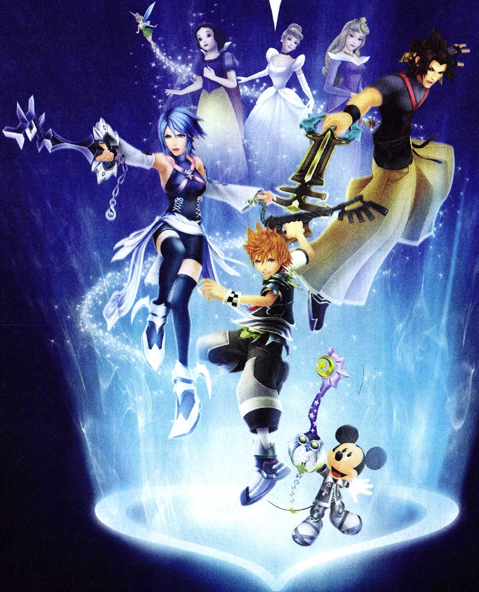
Disney SQUARE ENIX

KINGDOM HEARTS
Birth by Sleep



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Disney

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SQUARE ENIX.

qore

Presented by the PlayStation Network

Inside Qore Episode 29

Quick, pass the holy water; I've got a family reunion coming up!

This month, I'm getting back to my vampire-killing, whip-slapping roots with *Castlevania!* What, you thought this whole "Belmont" thing was just a coincidence? We voyaged to NYC to check out the reboot of the franchise, *Lords of Shadow*. We also hopped into the driver's seat (literally!) for *Gran Turismo 5,* and then learned what it takes to earn a Medal of Honor (a freakin' lot). Plus, our final clips from Japan in Tokyo!

VERONICA BELMONT HOST OF QORE

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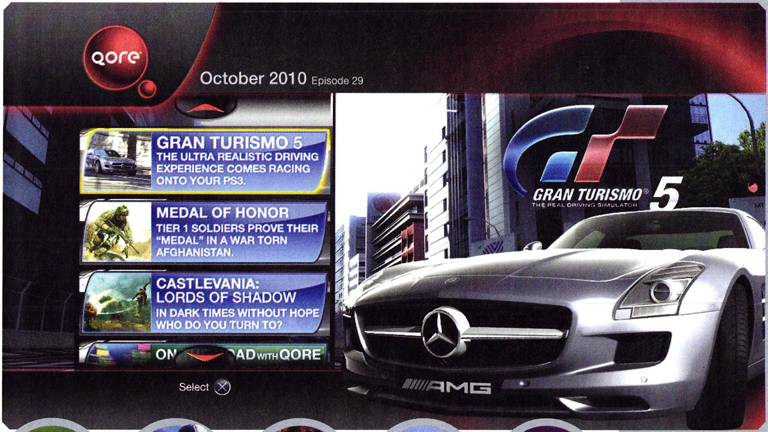
qore
October 2010 Episode 29
GRAN TURISMO 5
THE ULTRA REALISTIC DRIVING EXPERIENCE COMES RACING ONTO YOUR PS3.
MEDAL OF HONOR
TIER 1 SOLDIERS PROVE THEIR "MEDAL" IN A WAR TORN AFGHANISTAN.
CASTLEVANIA: LORDS OF SHADOW
IN DARK TIMES WITHOUT HOPE WHO DO YOU TURN TO?
ON ROAD WITH QORE
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GRAN TURISMO 5
THE REAL DRIVING SIMULATOR
AMG

Gran Turismo 5

With 1,000 cars to choose from, you'll never have the same driving experience twice. Care to join us on a little road trip?

Medal of Honor

Things are about to get a little hairy in Afghanistan. We mean that literally; check out the facial hair on these guys!

Castlevania: Lords of Shadow

Vampires, wargs, and Belmonts. Oh my! This reboot is a winner in our book.

On the Road With Qore: Tokyo

Our epic Japan adventure ends in the sprawling capital city of Tokyo.

Qore Ultimate Arqade

Qore's huge collection of original mini games available for download to Qore subcribers.

Qore is free to PlayStation Plus subscribers.

Individual episodes can be purchased for $2.99 and a 13-episode subscription can be purchased for $24.99. Qore subscribers have access to Betas, demos, themes, and additional downloadable content each month.

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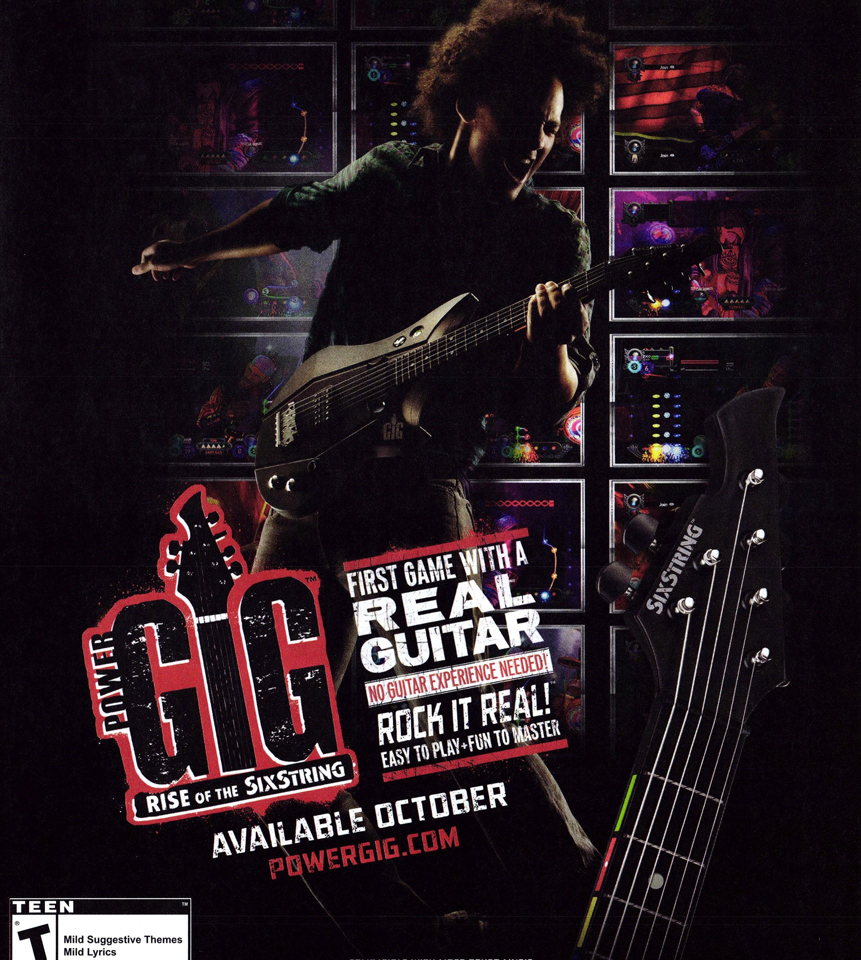

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The PlayStation Entertainment Plan

Fill up your life with our monthly guide

MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY | SUNDAY

OCT. 01

Leader of the Pac!
Thirty years ago, Pac-Man arrived in the U.S. and ate his way into our hearts.

02

04

MORTAL MONDAY!
Rip a spine in honor of *Mortal Kombat's* debut in arcades. It happened this month (although maybe not on Mortal Monday)

05

Long, Strange Trip
Enslaved: Odyssey to the West hits stores

08

09

Leif Erickson Day
Leif Erickson explored America years before Columbus. We're celebrating by plundering the refrigerator.

12

Cobra Bites
If it's not national hot cosplayer day, it darn well should be. People, meet the future Mrs. Greg Orlando.
--
In stores: *Lucha Libre AAA: Heroes del Ring, Medal of Honor*

14

National What?
We're not making this up: It's national chocolate-covered insect day.

16

Miraculous!
God performs his last and greatest miracle: The underdog New York Mets defeat the Baltimore Orioles to win their first World Series.

19

Fallout Drops
Stop reading. Go buy *Fallout: New Vegas*. Or else!
--
Also in stores: *Vanquish, Castlevania: Lords of Shadow*

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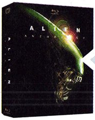
Smoke a Cuban
John F. Kennedy declares a naval quarantine around Cuba. It's not *Missile Command*, but very nearly nuclear war in 1962.



26

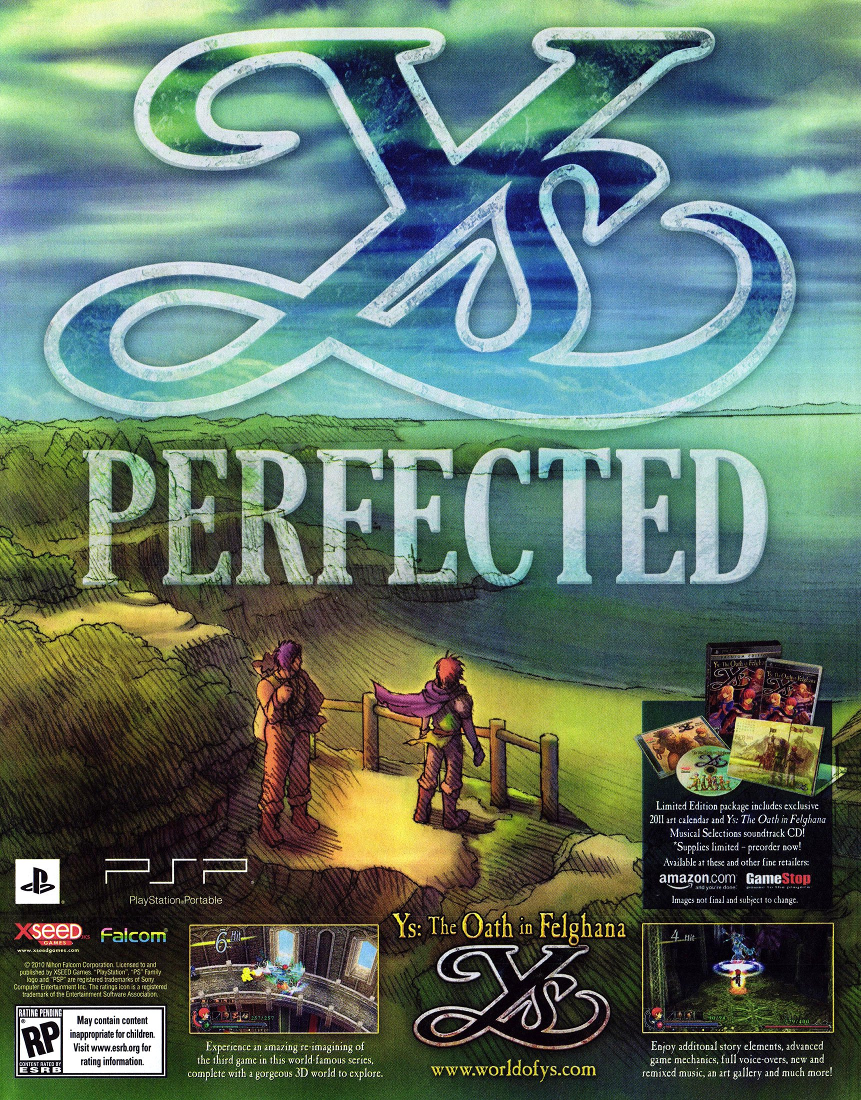
Aliens Aplenty
Game over, man! *Aliens Anthology* sees release on Blu-Ray.
--
In stores: *Star Wars: Force Unleashed II, Splatterhouse*

29

See-Saw
The gruesome *SAW* is coming to theaters in 3D. See it, and then play Konami's scarifying adventure *SAW II* to ensure a nice week hiding under the bed.

31

Grand Pumpkin Day!
This time, the pumpkin will bake you into a nice pie. Thank you, *Simpsons Treehouse of Horror XIX*.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The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about

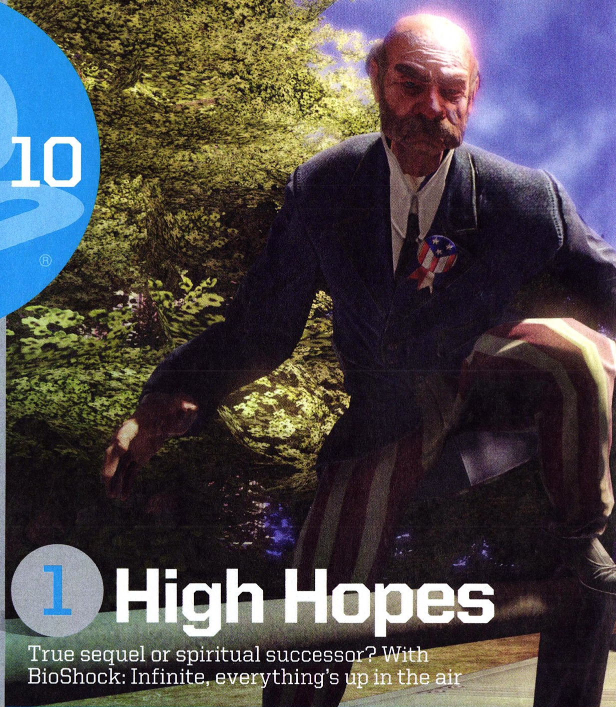
Ken Levine
We speak with *BioShock*'s creative mastermind
▸▸Page 12

Toy Story
Some call them toys, we call them aspirational figures
▸▸Page 17

15 and Counting!
PTOM celebrates 15 years of PlayStations and Polygon Men
▸▸Page 20

Massive!
BioWare's epic space RPG *Mass Effect 2* is coming to PS3
▸▸Page 22

Bond, James Bond
British superspy. Licensed to kill. Chick magnet. Game hero.
▸▸Page 23



1 High Hopes

True sequel or spiritual successor? With BioShock: Infinite, everything's up in the air

Clouds. Sunlight. Fresh air. And a 20,000-foot drop. What the hell is going on? "So obviously we're not in Rapture anymore," *BioShock* creator Ken Levine joked as a massive floating city filled the screen behind him at the long-awaited unveiling of Irrational Games' next project. *BioShock: Infinite* transports the franchise back to 1912 and trades the original game's underwater dystopia for an equally unstable city in the sky.

Originally created as a brash symbol of America's power and ingenuity, the floating metropolis—known as Columbia—toured the globe until a violent international incident exposed it as, in Levine's words, a "Death Star." After that, the city vanished into the clouds. The city only resurfaced when a mysterious benefactor hired disgraced former Pinkerton agent Booker DeWitt to rescue a Columbia prisoner named Elizabeth. Unfortunately for Booker, Columbia is steeped in an especially militant brand of ultranationalist pride, and Elizabeth appears to be at the center of its self-destructive turmoil.

Though the world itself seems to be starkly different from the Rapture we know and love, *Infinite* shares several important similarities with its predecessor, including its creeping sense of uneasiness. Just ask the woman calmly sweeping her stoop as the building behind her burns to the ground. The combat also stays true to the first game, giving players a variety of weapons and plasmids to use against their enemies. We even saw Booker and Elizabeth combine their plasmid powers to create ultra-powerful attacks.

But Big Daddies? Little Sisters? They're nowhere to be found. "There were no sacred cows," Levine says. So will Columbia's Fourth of July-themed nightmare prove as immersive and compelling as Rapture's art deco disaster? We have to wait until 2012 to find out.

> "So, obviously, we're not in Rapture anymore."
> —*Ken Levine*

Patriot Games

Ken Levine on the early 1900s: "This is the time when, you know, Teddy Roosevelt comes in, McKinley comes in, and they're saying, 'Well, America has a role on the world stage.' And we have this incredible optimism about the mission of America and this incredible optimism about technology, and those things just smacked together in this idea for us and became *BioShock: Infinite.*"

The Big 10

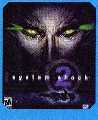
Stories everyone's talking about

2

The Great Unknown

BioShock's founding father Ken Levine reveals his master plan

With so much still unknown about *BioShock: Infinite's* brave new world, we turn to creative mastermind Ken Levine for a few surprising answers.



BioGraphy

Co-founder and creative director of Boston-based development studio Irrational Games, Ken Levine has created a number of celebrated game franchises, including *System Shock* and, of course, *BioShock* (though its sequel was developed by a separate team at 2K Marin). *BioShock: Infinite* will be Irrational's second console title.

Why not return to Rapture?

I think the fact that we knew how to do it is what made us not do it. We knew how to do that game, right from the start. That was too comfortable for us. The reason *BioShock* worked and the reason *Infinite* is interesting to me as a developer is because I don't know the answers to the questions. I don't want to become one of those bloated rock stars who plays his old hits at his arena shows and never does anything else creatively. So we had to basically explode everything we had.

So how will *Infinite* relate to the other games in the series?

I think that's something interesting for people to think about and speculate on. It's very much a *BioShock* game. To have it not be a *BioShock* game would be dishonest. But basically *everything* is up for grabs, even the things that are so core like Rapture.

It got thrown out! It got thrown out because *BioShock* was never just about a particular location.

Now that Rapture's claustrophobic environments are gone, will the game still be scary?

That was another one of the challenges we gave ourselves. We said, "Okay, we've made the dark, dank corridors before. Let's see how we make this work when you can't rely on that." We look at directors like Stanley Kubrick and David Lynch as great examples of how to tell stories of horror not set in haunted castles.

So situations like the men in the bar toasting the protagonist Booker rather than attacking him might be an example of that?

That's another prop that we sort of took out from underneath ourselves, which is: Everybody's crazy and attacks you on sight. Because that's what you expect in a first-person shooter, right? Because that's what happens normally. This time we stepped back and we said, "Wait a minute—what if you never knew what people were going to do when you encountered them? And you don't know what's going to happen or what's going to set them off?" You know, that's not a traditional horror scene where there's a guy with an axe coming up on you. But it's like, "Whoa, what am I..."

We noticed a distinct lack of Little Sisters in the trailer. Is the new character of Elizabeth like the player's new Little Sister?

We feel that the specific mechanic of the big guy and the little girl has been very well explored already. We've said what we've wanted to say about the specific save/harvest mechanic. So you're not going to see that here. Certainly there are things that maybe touch upon those elements in certain thematic ways. [Elizabeth's] going to have these powers, but she's never going to win the game for you and you don't control her. But you're going to build a relationship with her and feel an emotional attachment to her.

The trailer did feature larger characters that seem roughly analogous to Big Daddies...

There's a class of enemies in this game who are both more powerful than other enemies and also often serve to strategically augment the other enemies' abilities, act as leaders for those enemies, and impact upon their abilities.

Will all the traditional plasmids and tonics return?

Substantially expanded. Criticism we took away from *BioShock*—which I think is valid—is making more decisions but actually having to stick with some of those decisions and having those decisions be meaningful.

What inspired this idea of overzealous patriotism?

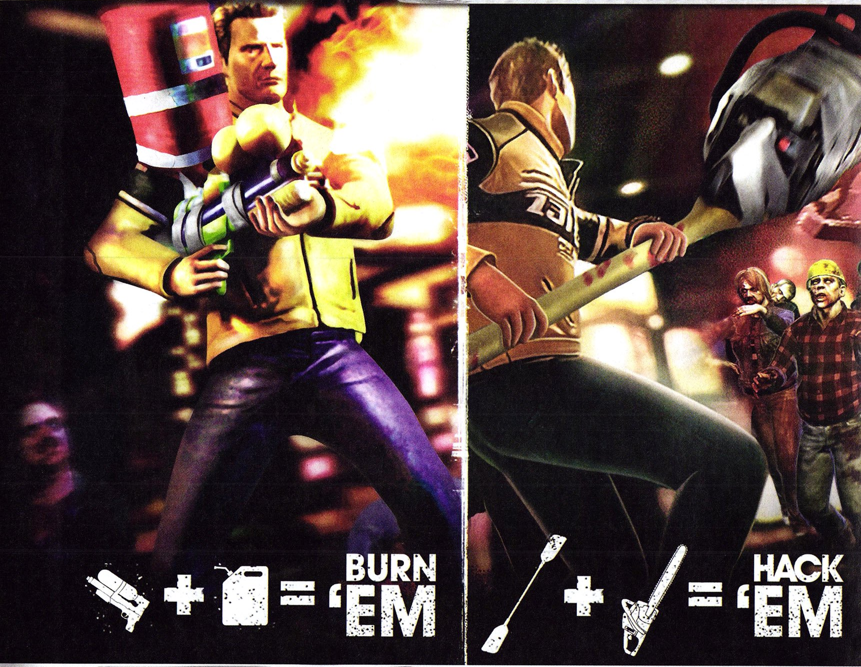
You know, people say "the real America" and you have people with very different visions of what that is and what that means, and they're all Americans who are all reading the same documents. And that's an idea we thought was super interesting: How do you take the same principles and yet be in conflict over them? And so that's our starting point for how we thought about this, and we weave a story from that conflict.

Why the title *BioShock: Infinite*?

That's the first question I can't really answer for you! The title has a lot of meaning, I'll say that. You're probably not going to understand what the meaning is until you actually play the game.

> "I don't want to become one of those bloated rock stars who plays his old hits at his arena shows and never does anything else creatively."

TAPE IT TOGETHER.



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Intense Violence
Language
Sexual Themes
Use of Alcohol

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3 Insomniac Reawakens

Resistance and Ratchet return to PS3 in a big way

After releasing a game every single year for more than a decade, Insomniac skipped 2010—but the studio wasn't just resting. Instead, it was working on two games to be released in 2011: *Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One* and *Resistance 3*.

Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One swaps the established platform action gameplay we know and love for a cooperative experience that lets up to four online or local players team up in an arcade-style brawler. Set in the time period of the original PS2 trilogy, *All 4 One* sees Captain Qwark and Doctor Nefarious join the titular stars in what looks to be a colorful and no doubt hilarious multiplayer adventure.

As for *Resistance 3,* Insomniac has yet to share any in-game footage or hard details, but a live-action teaser trailer shows a train chugging through the American heartland, capped off by a group of downtrodden folks blasting scads of familiar-looking aliens scrambling onto the train car. Insomniac says it wanted the trailer to "set the mood." We're stoked about the game of course, but now we're terrified of trains.

Who can sleep when aliens might attack America?

Play Nice

Insomniac hopes to "incentive" cooperative play by awarding points for working together. No word yet on what, if anything, the points can be used for.

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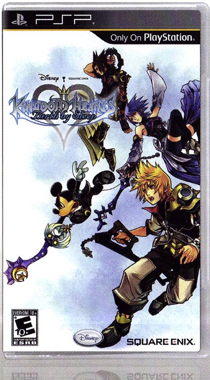
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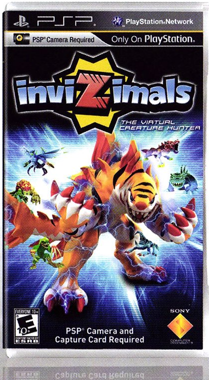
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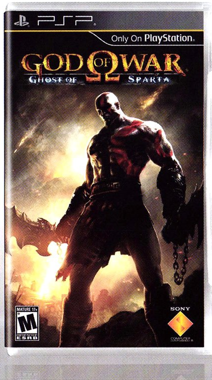
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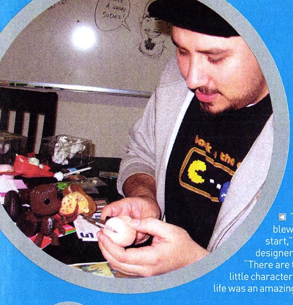
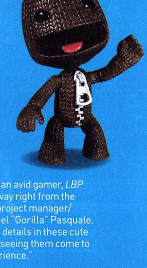




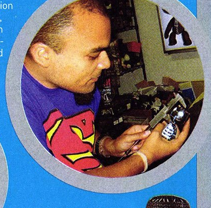
◀ "Being an avid gamer, *LBP* blew me away right from the start," says project manager/ designer Michael "Gorilla" Pasquale. "There are tons of details in these cute little characters, and seeing them come to life was an amazing experience."

4 Small World, Big Toys

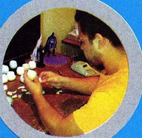
LittleBigPlanet's Sackboy comes to life

"Sackboy is the type of character that really gets the creative juices flowing. He has so many looks, there are almost literally endless possibilities," says Mezco Toys president Michael "Mez" Markowitz about his *LBP* toy line. "Sackboy can transform his persona to emulate almost any character from any medium. That's something very few entities are able to do, and Sackboy does it beautifully."

▶ Another important factor in production was playability, says Pierre Kalenzaga, sales coordinator. "These aren't 'action statues' or 'collectibles,' but honest-to-goodness toys like the ones we all used to play with as kids."



▶ A key to accurately representing Sackboy in three dimensions was getting a feel for the character's unique look. As sculptor Dave Cortez explains, "Working on the *LBP* figures was both fun and challenging. These characters had a lot going on; cute, simple shapes combined with realistic textures like yarn and canvas."



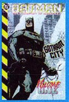
◀ Mike Drake, Mezco's director of special projects, has witnessed how the toys resonate with gamers firsthand. "It's always a thrill to be working on a project with name recognition. Sackboy has more than name recognition—people love him," explains Drake. "People are fanatical about him. We gave away some promotional Sackboy key chains at a show and you would think I was handing out beads at Mardi Gras. That's how excited people are."

Mezco's *LittleBigPlanet* toys are available in stores now.

5 Knight Reading

A guide to the best of Batman

Arkham isn't just an Asylum anymore, thanks to Warner Bros. Interactive's recently announced *Batman: Arkham City,* set for release in fall 2011. Now the Dark Knight will defend against Gotham's most unsavory denizens within a larger area constrained by maximum-security walls. With a year to wait, there's plenty of time to prepare with this Arkham City-inspired reading list.



BATMAN: NO MAN'S LAND

Gotham City is condemned after an earthquake, isolating those who remain behind and leaving Batman to reclaim his home turf.

BATMAN: ARKHAM ASYLUM

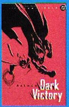
This tour-de-force graphic novel by Grant Morrison and Dave McKean tells a story similar to the first game, with the Joker and an assortment of rogues taking over the asylum.

BATMAN: THE LONG HALLOWEEN

This mystery story revolves around Holiday, a serial killer who strikes on various holidays. The mood and tone created by the all-star team of Jeph Loeb and Tim Sale is equal parts creepy and awesome.

BATMAN: HUSH

Loeb and superartist Jim Lee reimagine Batman's Rogues' Gallery with panache. The look of *Arkham City's* Catwoman may have been inspired by *Hush.*



BATMAN: DARK VICTORY

This sequel to *The Long Halloween* by Loeb and Sale drops the Dark Knight into a hunt for a serial killer known as the Hangman, while Two-Face becomes embroiled in a turf war with the Falcone crime family.

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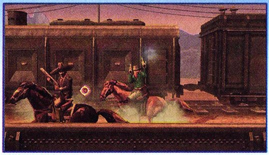

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6

PlayStation Turns 15!

Good: The story begins, as the PlayStation launches in the U.S.
Bad: Polygon Man, the original PlayStation mascot, left as soon as he arrived.
Huh? How did *Street Fighter: The Movie: The Game* sneak into the otherwise solid launch?

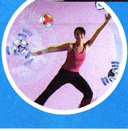
1995

Good: PlayStation hits its stride with *Resident Evil*, *Tomb Raider*, and *Crash Bandicoot*.
Bad: *Twisted Metal 2* sells through hotly, inspiring an army of middling copycats.
Thrifty! Sony abandons the tall CD cases in favor of standard jewel cases.

1996

Good: *Final Fantasy VII* makes the PlayStation family the de facto home of cinematic gaming.
Bad: *Bubsy 3D*
Kick, Punch! Quirky and just a little bit strange, *PaRappa the Rapper* hits the U.S. and becomes a cult hit.

1997



Good: The PlayStation Portable debuts, starting a new branch on the PlayStation family tree.
Bad: Thousands of men, women, and children publicly humiliate themselves playing with the EyeToy Play.
Done. At this point, Sony no longer actively pushes the original PlayStation.

2003

Good: In yet another evolutionary step, the PS2 can now support a hard drive. It helped to reduce loading times in some games.
Bad: However, very few games actually supported the hard drive.
Soft ...and a newer version of the PS2 lacked the capability to work with said hard drive.

2004

PS Fun Fact

If every PS2 ever sold were laid end to end, they would circle the earth almost exactly once.

Good: The PlayStation 3 is formally announced at E3 2005.
Bad: Although a gaming hit, the PlayStation Portable's UMD movies didn't prove popular.
Kratos! *God of War* and *Devil May Cry 3* released within a month of each other, sparking fanboy arguments over which is best.

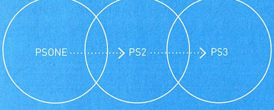
2005

Good: The PS3 finds North American shelves. Equipped with one of the best (and most affordable, at the time) Blu-ray drives, it ushered in the dominant HD media format.
Bad: Between the historically accurate Giant Enemy Crab and the $599 price point announcement, Sony's 2006 E3 keynote was lambasted.
Black! Thanks to the PSP, the PlayStation brand made its first profit in 11 years.

2006

Good: Across the line, the PlayStation family gets price cuts and new revisions—including the PSP Slim.
Bad: Ken Kutaragi, "The Father of the PlayStation," leaves Sony.
Tricky! A hoax involving PS3 warranty repair is the talk of the Internet. Shortly afterwards, the actor behind it is found out and the story falls by the wayside.

2007



The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about

The good, bad, and screwy for all 15 years

Ah, 1986. Nine years before the PlayStation's U.S. debut, Sony worked with Nintendo on the "Super NES Nintendo Disc (ND) Drive." The console was revealed in June 1991 at the Consumer Electronics Show, but by that point the system's future was in doubt. Shortly afterward, Sony and Nintendo ended their partnership.

But despite the ND Drive's failure, the project still lived on in Sony's halls. With Ken Kutaragi leading development and Phil Harrison spearheading the effort to attract companies to make games for the then-unreleased platform, the PlayStation project was well underway. And thus, history began.

1998

Good: Simulation racing goes from the niche to the mainstream with the launch of *Gran Turismo*.
Bad: Dual-analog controllers had been available for the PlayStation for over a year, but no game requires it.
Ubiquitous! PlayStation finds its way into 1 of every 10 U.S. homes.

1999

Good: The DualShock is required for the first time by *Ape Escape*. Several other games followed its lead, making it the industry-wide standard for controllers.
Bad: Sony and Bleem Company begin a legal battle over Bleem!, a commercial PlayStation emulator for PC and Dreamcast.
Price Drop! The original PlayStation hits $99, right in time for the PS2's release.

2000

Good: *Metal Gear Solid 2* gets unveiled at E3 2000. The reaction to the trailer is unrivaled to this day.
Bad: Much to the glee of the competition, manufacturing delays slowed the PS2's early adoption.
WMD? Japan imposed a limit on PS2 exports, citing the console was high-tech enough for military applications.

2001

Good: Perennial PlayStation hit-maker Naughty Dog gets acquired by SCEA.
Bad: Other major players in the gaming space launch new consoles, making for more competition.
Dream Over! The closest competitor at the time, Sega's Dreamcast, is discontinued.

2002

Good: Sony ships the PS2 network adaptor in North America, leading to an uptick in online gaming.
Bad: For better or for worse, then-exclusive *Grand Theft Auto III* and *Vice City* redefine videogame controversy.
Mini! Although long in the tooth at this point, the PSone gets a new revision with an included screen. PlayStation Portable? Kinda.

2008

Good: *Metal Gear Solid 4* snuck onto shelves, providing an experience that fully utilized the system's power.
Bad: Yet another core player in PlayStation history, Phil Harrison, leaves the company. He had previously worked on the launch team for every PlayStation console.
Ticket! *Grand Theft Auto IV* had enough pre-release hype that the summer movie schedule shifted to avoid it.

2009

Good: A new PS3 Slim is shown off. Although the main attractions were the slightly smaller footprint and the larger hard drive, the big news is that the console branding no longer carried the Spider-Man font.
Bad: Scandal hits again in the pre-release hype for *Modern Warfare 2* as "No Russian" is leaked to the Internet.
UMD-Free! Sony changes the portable game again with the PSPgo, a system that runs only digitally downloaded titles.

2010

Good: PlayStation Move arrives, with early impressions pegging it as better than its contemporaries.
Bad: Conflicts with the internal clock and the PlayStation Network cause problems with older PS3s worldwide. The issue is resolved within a day, however.
Ugly! Thanks to motion control, every home console now has the ability to make the user look like a total dork.

The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about

7 Mass Appeal

BioWare's strategy RPG landing on PS3

Our Shepard
In the *Mass Effect* universe, players can opt to play as a male or female Shepard. The choice won't influence the character's attributes, but it will play a role in the relationships he or she forms—including romances with other party members.

The unlikely rumor circulated online for a while, but Electronic Arts and BioWare finally came out and said it: *Mass Effect 2* is coming to the PS3. We've been jealous of the previously PC- and Xbox-exclusive since 2007, but no longer. We're ready to get our sci-fi strategy-RPG this January.

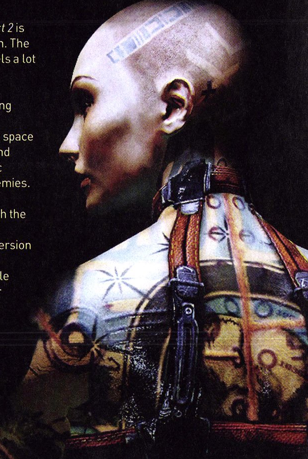
Our first reaction: Confusion. Thanks to legal mumbo-jumbo—namely that Microsoft owns the publishing rights—we won't get to play the original *Mass Effect* on PS3. Given that the space opera's gargantuan universe is filled with established characters and stories, we're terrified to jump in unaware of what's going on.

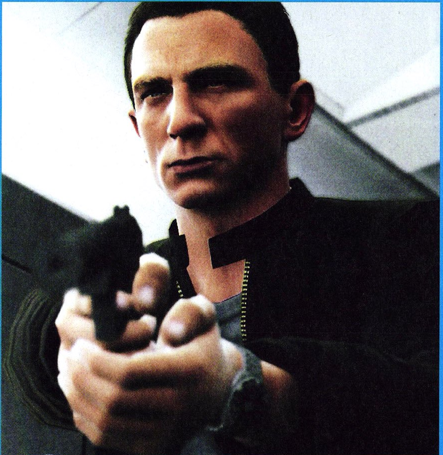
But BioWare assures us we'll be eased into the world without having to spend 50 hours slogging through the first game's story. We'll learn all about hero Commander Shepard, his ascension to spectre status—think space secret agent—and the choices he made to keep the galaxy intact.

What excites about *Mass Effect 2* is its stellar mix of story and action. The get-the-gang-together story feels a lot like a heist flick and the tactical shootouts with interesting alien races—like the colony-kidnapping Collectors—are fast-paced and electric. When we're not trading space bullets with bad guys from behind cover, we'll use magic-like biotic powers to lift, hurl, or crush enemies. That, or we'll turn the artificial intelligence against its allies with the hacking tech power.

As an added bonus, the PS3 version includes most (or all, if BioWare can swing it) of the downloadable expansions already available for *Mass Effect 2.*

BioWare's track record all but guarantees an exceptional experience. We can't wait to hit the spaceways and make some serious game-changing, universe-altering decisions.





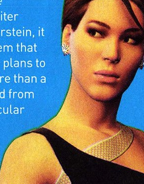
8 Stone Cold

James Bond gets Bizarre treatment

With beleaguered Hollywood studio MGM in dire financial straits, some doubt has been cast over the future of the James Bond film franchise. Which means this year's sole contribution could come in the form of a videogame—*James Bond 007: Blood Stone,* Activision's second Bond title, and Bizarre Creations' first hack at the franchise.

Primarily a third-person, cover-based shooter, the game uses a modified version of the engine Bizarre built for its 2008 shooter *The Club,* and is being developed by many who worked on that title. Interestingly, it's also something of an actor-led production: Bizarre is working hard to bring the steel-jawed sadism that Daniel Craig so effectively harnessed to help rejuvenate the most recent Bond films. Bond is capable of a wide assortment of context-sensitive melee attacks: Holding up on the analog stick provides added brutality, while holding back will perform something more subtle and stealthy (throwing a head into the side of a desk versus, say, a Vulcan neck pinch). Keeping killings quiet will provide players with extra focus aim tokens, which are in turn used to execute precision, slow-motion headshots.

Of course, Bizarre is a studio that made its name in the racing genre with the likes of *Blur* and *Project Gotham Racing,* so it's unsurprising *Stone's* chase sequences (on both land and sea) are more than mere afterthoughts. With a story that extends from Turkey to Greece to Tokyo, the voices and likenesses of both Craig and Dame Judi Dench, and a story penned by *GoldenEye* screenwriter Bruce Feirstein, it would seem that Activision plans to wring more than a little blood from this particular *Stone.*

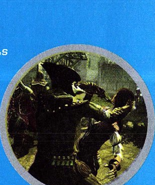


9 The Readers' Most Wanted

For the fourth month in a row, *Call of Duty: Black Ops* and *Gran Turismo 5* battle for the number one spot while completely pulling away from the rest of the pack. *Batman: Arkham City* and *Mortal Kombat* finally join the list, while *Twisted Metal* makes its triumphant return after an inexplicable absence last month.

01	*Call of Duty: Black Ops*
02	*Gran Turismo 5*
03	*Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood* (tie)
03	*LittleBigPlanet 2* (tie)
05	*Medal of Honor*
06	*Killzone 3*
07	*Mortal Kombat*
08	*Final Fantasy XIV*
09	*Twisted Metal*
10	*Marvel vs. Capcom 3: Fate of Two Worlds*
11	*Dead Rising 2*
12	*Rock Band 3*
13	*Batman: Arkham City*
14	*SOCOM 4: U.S. Navy SEALs*
15	*Fallout: New Vegas*
16	*Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit*
17	*Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II*
18	*Dead Space 2*
19	*Guitar Hero: Warriors of Rock*
20	*Max Payne 3*

GRAN TURISMO 5



ASSASSIN'S CREED

Stats in this chart appear courtesy of OTX Research. All games are PS3 titles scheduled to release after September 1, 2010. Polling period was August 1, 2010 to August 14, 2010.

The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about

10 Are inverted players really like the rest of us?

Harmless freaks or gaming menace? Reverse controls turn us upside down

Yes

Says proponent of reverse engineering **Scott Butterworth**

Discrimination in any form is an ugly thing. But it's an especially bitter pill to swallow when administered by those with whom we have so much in common. By opting to ignore our shared passions and focus instead on our petty differences, they choose (tragically) to forfeit a bond of friendship in favor of crippling animosity.

I should know—I'm an inverted player.

Every game demo, every local multiplayer match, people roll their eyes or snort: "Oh, you're one of those." Well the time has come to take a stand. I am here to say, "Stop the hate!" I am here to say, "United we stand!" I am here to say, "It's no more strange than being left-handed!"

Allow me to provide a glimpse inside the mind of an inverted player: A first-person camera provides an accurate simulation of our real-life vision, right? That means the analog stick that controls the camera essentially controls our head and neck. Well, how do we look at the ceiling? We tilt our heads back. And how do we look at the floor? We tilt our heads forward. Think about it.

Sure, it's possible that the flight sims I played as a child helped shape my inverted nature, but I refuse to apologize for playing the way I do. So developers take note: If you do not give me the option to invert the Y-axis, I will not play your game...because I literally won't be able to. And to my inverted brethren: Rise up and let yourselves be known!

No

Says forward facing, forward looking, and forward thinking **Gary Steinman**

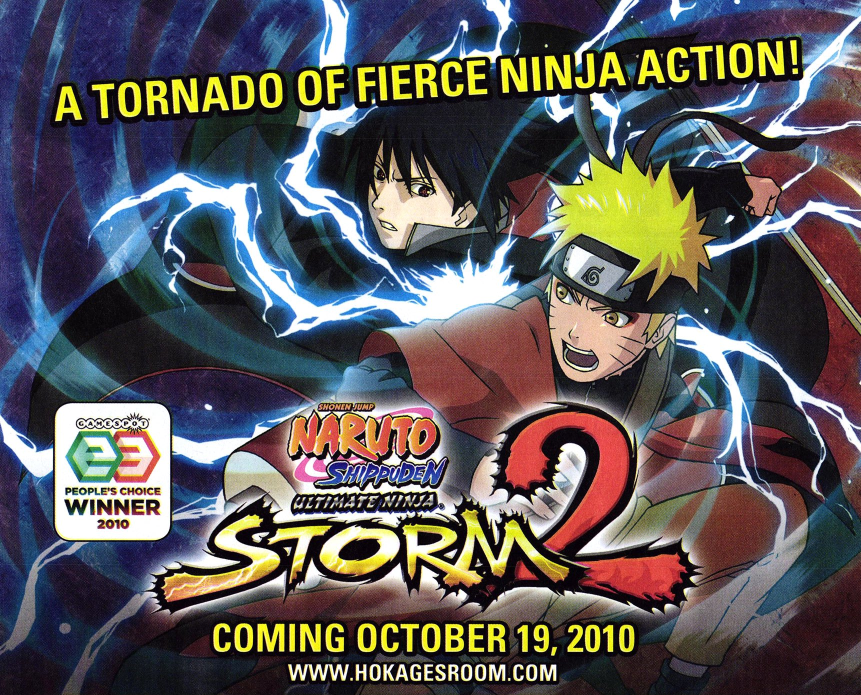
Call it the old toilet seat argument: If I leave the seat down for my wife (yes, ladies, I'm taken), then I have to continually lift it up when I need to use it. The difference here? Whereas the potty problem is driven by inescapable biological differences, there's no such differentiating factor here. Up is up, down is down, right is right... and Scott is wrong.

But, you ask, why should I care what other gamers do? Let them play as they please.

Well it *does* affect me. And not just because of the whole annoying problem of having to switch the controls during group demos of games, or when I'm playing with a wrong-way pal who hands me his controller for whatever reason. It irks me because inverted controls are the first stumble on that slippery slope to non-standard control schemes. Developers have only so much time, and if we could all agree on a standard way to play, all the hard-working heroes on those dev teams could move their focus onto things that matter. Like, say, level design. Or story. Or *anything else*. Because it's not simply a matter of allowing for different controls—these poor devs need to make sure all the different control schemes actually work. And that, my friends, takes time.

Oh, who am I kidding? It's probably no big deal to the devs. I just don't like it because I don't, and because I'm correct, and wrong things must be fixed before the world goes swirling down the crapper.

A TORNADO OF FIERCE NINJA ACTION!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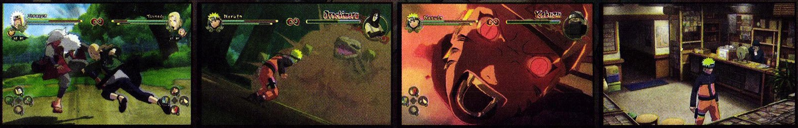
Jiraiya
Tsunade
Naruto
Orochimaru
Naruto
Kakuzu

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Previews

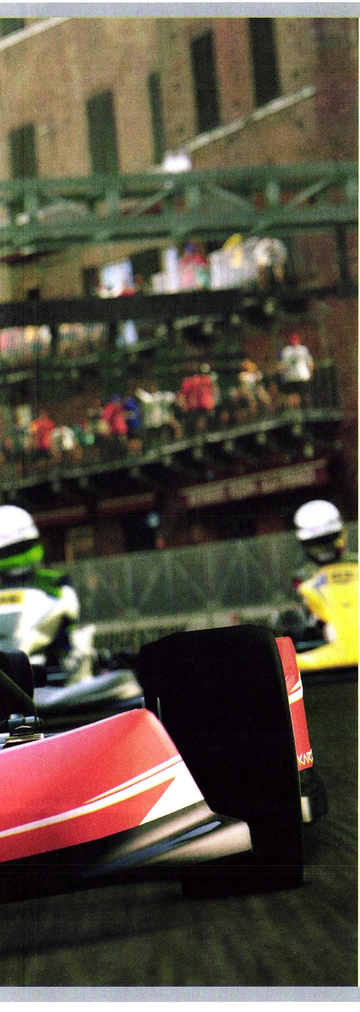
GRAN TURISMO
POLYPHONY
5
GT KART100
GT KART100
GT KART100
TURISMO

Quick Pitch

Online Turismo
Gran Turismo 5 will be the first full title in the series to feature online play, supporting up to 16 players.

Collateral Damage
It will be the first game in the series to feature damage-modeling on the cars.

Multi-Dimensional
GT5 will also be the first realistic driving game to implement true 3D TV support.



WORLD EXCLUSIVE HANDS-ON
PlayStation. The Official Magazine

HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **November** Pub **SCEA** Dev **Polyphony Digital**

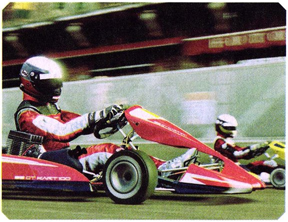
Gran Turismo 5

GT meets HD in 3D

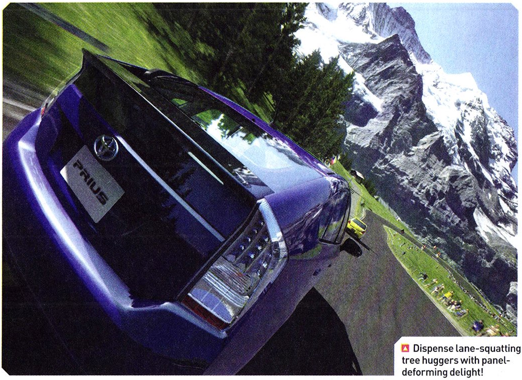
Realism is, above all else, *Gran Turismo's* claim to fame: The series has always traded in the sort of borderline-psychotic attention to detail that makes it, at times, nearly indistinguishable from real life. This singular brand of OCD has returned in *Gran Turismo 5,* fueled this time around not only by the Polyphony team's natural compulsion, but also by the untapped power of the PS3 hardware.

Case in point: There was a moment in our demo when, driving along one of the game's rally courses at night, with our tires kicking up dust and chunks of earth, the game's realism came front and center. See, as is the case in real life, *GT5's* nighttime is not lit by anything other than the moon, the stars, and our car's headlights—the culmination of which makes simply seeing where we're going a rather challenging experience. It felt remarkably like...well, driving at night, recalling childhood journeys home from grandparents' houses and summer vacations in the country. This all comes thanks to the game's new lighting engine; day and night cycles will occur over the course of a race, and all of the car's lights (inside and out) will automatically turn on at dusk. Likewise, as stereoscopic vision is something that helps tremendously in allowing drivers to see in minimal light, we can't wait to see what added effect 3D support will have on the game's night racing.

But there's more here than just pretty pictures—not the least of which is hard data. Essentially, the *GT5* experience is broken down into two main modes: A-Spec and B-Spec, which have returned to the series after a brief hiatus. Essentially, A-Spec is for virtual drivers, while B-Spec is for those who prefer watching from the sidelines—or, for that matter, from pretty much anywhere else. Here, *GT5* goes realistic and then some: Not only will we have access to the in-car view of any driver on the track, but also crane shots, aerial perspectives, and complex tracking shots, the likes of which are virtually impossible to pull off in real life. We're also provided with ▶▶



Gran Turismo 5 promises to have 1,000 or so cars available, including go-karts and NASCAR vehicles. Not included will be that hateful Christine or the Popemobile.



Dispense lane-squatting tree huggers with panel-deforming delight!

a stream of information, both real-time and historical, about the race and its contestants.

While the final vehicle count for *GT5* is still not determined, it will hover around 1,000, ranging from Honda Civics to Lamborghini Gallardos and everything in between (and yes, that "in between" includes both the Toyota Prius and go-karts, as well as NASCAR vehicles). With access to a full range of upgrades and modifications, players will be able to swap parts—body, engine, exhaust, brakes, suspension, tires and more—and customize vehicles down to "fractions of degrees," according to Sony. This attention to detail is key to the experience: In recreating the game's 70 tracks, the development team has reportedly been able to nail them down to a matter of inches from their real-life counterparts, from start to finish. License tests will once again be included in the game, allowing players to earn extra money for cars and upgrades.

While many details remain under wraps, Sony has continued to insist *GT5's* online mode will redefine the multiplayer experience for the racing genre. What we do know is that the game will support up to 16 players simultaneously (and even more for viewing), and that banter among friends can be performed via either voice or text chat. Likewise, all of the rule negotiation, wrangling, and friend management takes place through the game's custom-built online interface. And with a November 2 release date finally in place, it's nearly time to start those engines. **EVAN SHAMOON**

> "GT5's online mode will redefine the multiplayer experience."

Want More?
Slide right into the driver's seat with an exclusive look at *Gran Turismo 5's* world-class rides in Qore's episode 29.
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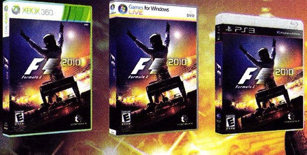

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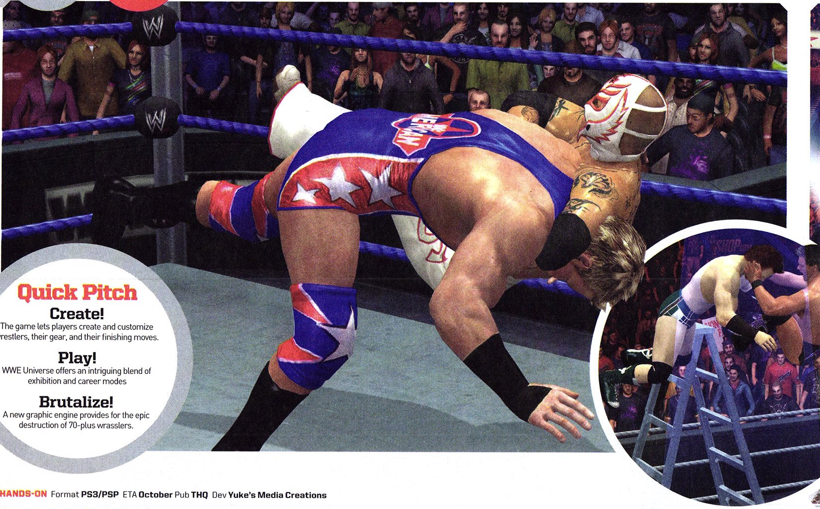


Quick Pitch

Create!
The game lets players create and customize wrestlers, their gear, and their finishing moves.

Play!
WWE Universe offers an intriguing blend of exhibition and career modes

Brutalize!
A new graphic engine provides for the epic destruction of 70-plus wrasslers.

HANDS-ON Format **PS3/PSP** ETA **October** Pub **THQ** Dev **Yuke's Media Creations**

WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2011

Like a slobberknocker for a pier-six brawl...

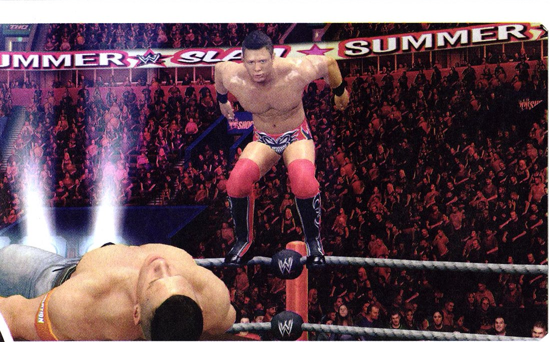
The spandex circus has again wheeled its way into town, bringing men in garish attire whacking one another with steel chairs. It's called professional wrestling, and beyond the fact the wrestlers get paid, there's not much about it that's, well, *professional.*

Except, of course, for goofy wrestler Santino Morella. THQ has trotted him out to promote *WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2011* and, for the sake of pro wrestling and professional comedy, he's begun butchering the English language. "Realityism is very important," he says. "For example, if you ask a child here: pretend to be a singer and you have the option of a microphone or a stick. Ninety-nine percent of the kids will choose the microphone, and that one percent, well, he's going to be crazy so don't worry about him."

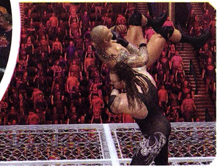
THQ and Yuke's long-running *SmackDown vs. Raw* series offers World Wrestling Entertainment grappling action at its most brutal and, with luck, its most realistic. This year's iteration offers a roster of 70 wrestlers—give or take—and a new physics engine the developers claim will allow players to live out their most cherished moments from historical pro wrestling matches. This means combatants can use steel ladders as ramps, placing them outside the ring and leaning them against the top rope. Wrestlers

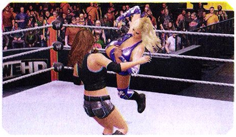
OH, THE MATCHES! OH, THE HUMANITY!

WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2011 offers all kinds of contests, from vanilla one-on-ones to steel cage matches to TLC bouts with tables, ladders, and chairs.



ProTip: Jumping off the corner turnbuckle and crashing into a grown man in order to send him hurtling through a table is awesome.





> "Realityism is very important."
> –Santino Morella, WWE star

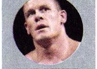
can run up these makeshift ramps, say, and launch their bodies off them to attack a foe or to leap onto a ladder set up inside the ring. Ladders can also be used as platforms for a wrestler's finishing maneuvers and dropping sucka wrestlers through folding tables has been made much easier. "There was only a certain way to break a table in last year's game," creative director Cory Ledesma says. "Now, we've tied any move where you lift an opponent up and you can target a table...[it] will put him right through the table." No word though on THQ's final table budget for the game.

Gripping Stories

For fans of WWE's crazy plotlines, *2011* offers two delightful story-based modes. Road to Wrestlemania, puts players in the role of a wrestler as he takes a three-month journey to wrestling's premier event. The second, WWE Universe, blends elements of exhibition and career modes; it creates a calendar full of wrestling events and allows players to take part in matches, simulate them, or edit them to their liking. The game then adapts to a player's choices, creating rivalries between wrestlers, creating wrestling teams and factions (with shifting alliances), and generating cutscenes to further storylines. Wrestlers in cutscenes run into the ring to interfere with matches, push hated enemies off stretchers, and waylay foes in the backstage areas. All that's missing, says WWE mainstay Kofi Kingston, is the real-world pain wrestlers feel after a match. **GREG ORLANDO**

Cast List

THE CHAMP
Sheamus is one pale dude.



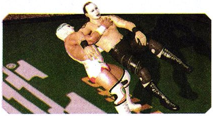
THE OTHER CHAMP
John "The champ is here!" Cena

ELDER STATESMAN
Bret Hart, WWE legend

WOMEN'S CHAMP
Melina. No last name.

THE TRUTH
R-Truth. What's up?

Could Be a Contender



Lucha Libre AAA: Heroes Del Ring

Mexican-style wrestling may well bring the smackdown

The Premise

High-flying and oftentimes masked wrestlers take center stage for a celebration of lucha libre ("free fighting" in Spanish). Get ready to enjoy a style of wrestling not oftentimes seen in the WWE.

The Reality

Konami's *Heroes Del Ring* attempts to capture the insanity of Mexican-style wrestling. The focus in this October release is on simple fun, with easy-to-learn controls and exaggerated moves.

The Hook

Players create masks for their luchadors and Mask vs. Mask matches offer the opportunity to beat a foe senseless and then steal his headgear (and dignity).

The Chances

The game looks awesome, but as it's the first time out of the gate for developer Immersion, *Ring* might lack the features and polish of other more established wrestling game franchises.

HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **October** Pub **Sega** Dev **PlatinumGames**

Vanquish

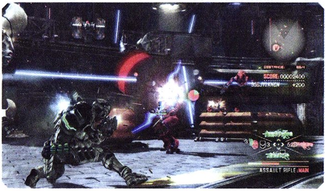
Combat at the speed of fight

The biggest danger in *Vanquish* may be the inclination to play it as a typical third-person shooter. Judiciously moving from cover to cover while copiously unleashing our firepower makes for a gratifying experience, but it's hero Sam Gideon's Augmented Reaction Suit (ARS) that injects the adrenaline into the game's action.

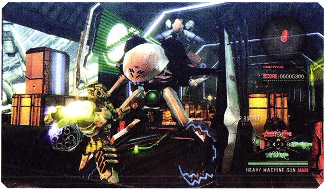
The ARS imbues Sam with superhuman levels of speed and agility, which in combination with the suit's protective armor and arsenal of weapons allows us to eschew standard battlefield tactics in favor of a more offensive one-man-wrecking-crew approach.

In our assault of the Russian-occupied SC-01 Providence space station, Sam flipped, rocket-slid, and somersaulted his way through swathes of enemy combat robots. A bullet-time–like AR mode slowed down the action and helped target weak points, but overuse of the ability overheats the suit's systems. Boss battles like the one against the giant KNRB-0 Argus robot required a balance between attack, evasion, and full use of the suit's capabilities to stay alive.

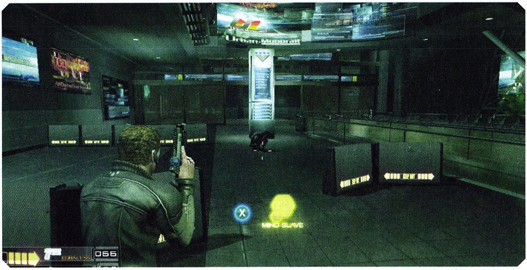
But the true test of the ARS's (and our) abilities came in our preview build's cliffhanger showdown against arch-nemesis Victor Zaitsev. Zaitsev also has an ARS, but his rocket-pack–equipped suit allows him to attack from the air. Gideon unleashes a special move to survive the encounter, but the Russian's suit may well be more powerful. **ROGER BURCHILL**

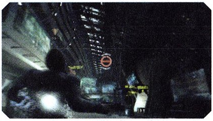


Entering AR mode temporarily slows down the action to aid targeting, but will overheat the ARS and leaves Gideon vulnerable.



Whataya mean that's not even a level boss? Are you freakin' kidding us?! "That's it man, game over man, game over!"





It's true: We don't know Jack. Sometimes it seems like we don't know Jack Squat, either.

HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **October** Pub **Square Enix** Dev **Feel Plus**

Mindjack

Adding a head trip to headshots

A mind is a terrible thing to waste, and the third-person shooter *Mindjack* is...mindful of this. Technology in *Mindjack's* world has made it possible for man's brain to not only plot out his next Cheez Doodle meal, but also to hijack other people's bodies.

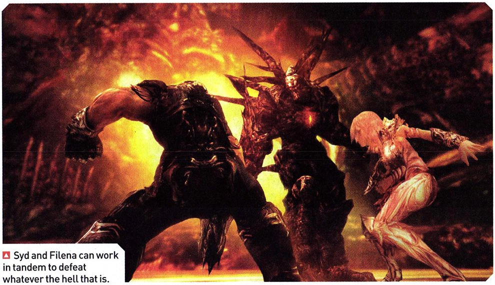
In *Mindjack*, we start the game as the protagonist Jim, but our excursion can be "hacked" into via PSN by five other players. Two players can join us as allies on the blue team, and three enemies can seek to thwart us as a red team. The resultant experience is both chaotic and intriguing, not to mention wholly bizarre in spots; Square has managed to put a neat twist on an otherwise straightforward shooter.

Jim can possess soldiers and citizens alike, although the folks at Square Enix were hard-pressed to answer why some of the citizens in this vaguely futuristic airport terminal (the game is set in 2031) are wearing only a bra-and-panties and why all of them are packing heat. "Suspension of disbelief," one of Square's representatives shrugs. Jim can also transfer his consciousness into mechanical drones for extra firepower or take a disembodied jaunt—the effect called "wander mode"— to explore his terrain.

Red team foes don't possess mind-hacking technology, but they can access and control—and this is not a typographical error—monsters such as giant cybernetic gorillas. Truly, 'jacking into this game's thought patterns will be, if nothing else, memorable. **GREG ORLANDO**

Dead End

The future doesn't make much sense to us, what with its random citizens always packing heat and frequently wearing lingerie in public. It's like *Blade Runner* only, you know, dumber.



Syd and Filena can work in tandem to defeat whatever the hell that is.

HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **October** Pub **Tecmo Koei** Dev **Team Tachyon**

Quantum Theory

The science of slaughter

Dwarf tossing may be morally repugnant, but *Quantum Theory* wants us to know it's perfectly okay for protagonist Syd to hurl his female compatriot Filena at troll-like foes. All is fair, after all, in love and *Gears of War*-esque third-person shooters. As the mysterious Syd, we used a host of weapons to dispatch gun-toting monsters. The game emphasizes leapfrogging from cover to cover and working well with AI-controlled allies—even the ones hurled at foes in anger—to ensure the downfall of a living tower. **GREG ORLANDO**

LittleBIG Planet™ 2
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"it's going to be amazing."
-Kotaku
"a full-scale evolution"
- Game Informer

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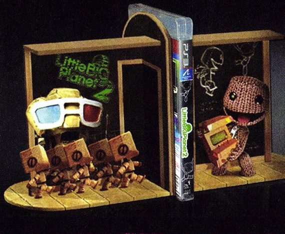

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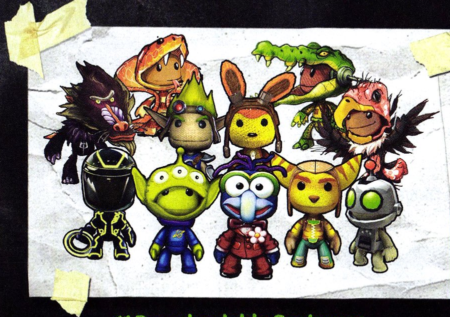
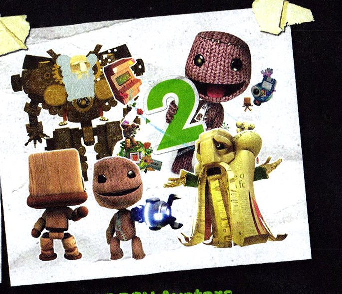


11 Downloadable Costumes



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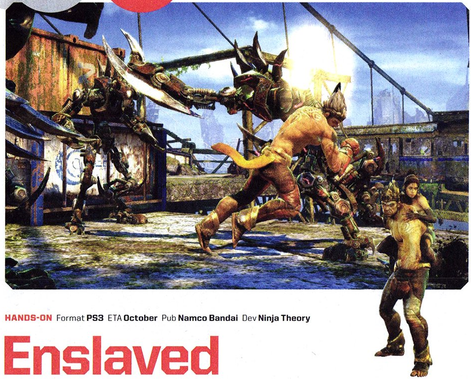
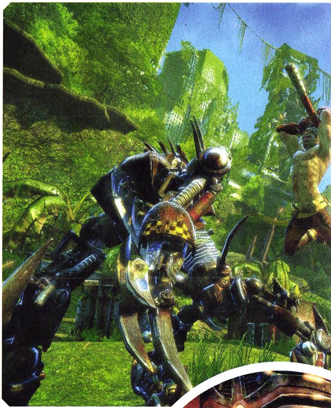


HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **October** Pub **Namco Bandai** Dev **Ninja Theory**

Enslaved
Odyssey to the West
A captivating adventure—or forced labor?



There's something deeply stirring about a skyscraper overgrown with lush green vegetation. As we played through the first half of the nearly finished game, we became more and more enamored with the intriguing world of *Enslaved*... despite its autonomous killer robots that threatened to kill or capture us at any moment.

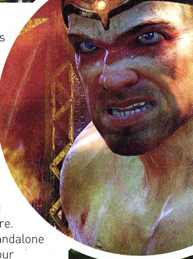
The story follows two circumstantial allies—the young, frightened Trip and her enslaved partner Monkey—as they navigate this beautiful yet perilous landscape and journey toward Trip's hometown 300 miles away. The plot points are predictable, but the story moves along briskly, thanks in part to the engaging interplay between the flawed but likable duo.

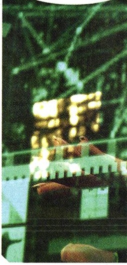
Freedom Is Slavery

Enslaved mixes a variety of genres and play styles to create a complex gaming amalgam. The action combines classic two-button, combo-based melee combat with a smidge of third-person shooting complete with strafing and down-sight aiming. The game's real focus, however, is puzzle-based platforming, which incorporates everything from stealth to *Uncharted 2*-esque free climbing to cover-hopping while avoiding persistent gunfire. We even encountered a few standalone switch-based puzzles that, to our pleasant surprise, were legitimately challenging.

Enslaved does an admirable job of balancing out its parts, if occasionally straying toward simplicity. The free climbing could be clunky, but it also provided a few dramatic controller-clenching moments. And though the enemies started to feel repetitive, the fighting mechanics and various combat scenarios proved satisfying.

We did encounter some other gameplay frustrations, but if the developers can address these niggling issues, *Enslaved* could potentially prove that the journey itself can be the reward. **SCOTT BUTTERWORTH**





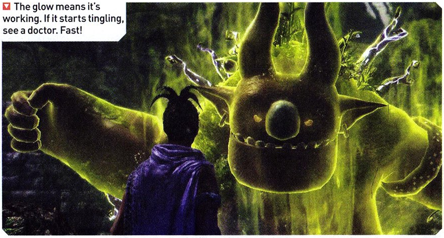
In Chains Meet Enslaved's heroes

Trip, the slavemaster
It's not as bad as it sounds. True, Trip did fit the much stronger Monkey with a headband forcing him to follow her commands, but she's not nearly as sadistic as the game's title suggests. In fact, her vulnerability makes her a very sympathetic character, and the pair's relationship is far more pleasant and relatable than expected.

Monkey, the man in chains
Despite his rippling muscles and imposing combat staff, Monkey isn't a super soldier out to save the world. Quite the opposite: He and Trip actively avoid combat because they're always outnumbered and outpowered, which adds a layer of of intensity and makes the duo more endearing. Who doesn't like rooting for the underdogs?

Combat is often a last resort—but when it comes, Monkey sticks with the job.

"So then I told him, 'Morrie, when I nod my head you hit it,' and wouldn't you know it, when I nodded my head, Morrie hit it. Then, when I woke up in the hospital, it was already Arbor Day."



The glow means it's working. If it starts tingling, see a doctor. Fast!

HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **November** Pub **Namco Bandai** Dev **Game Republic**

Majin and the Forsaken Kingdom

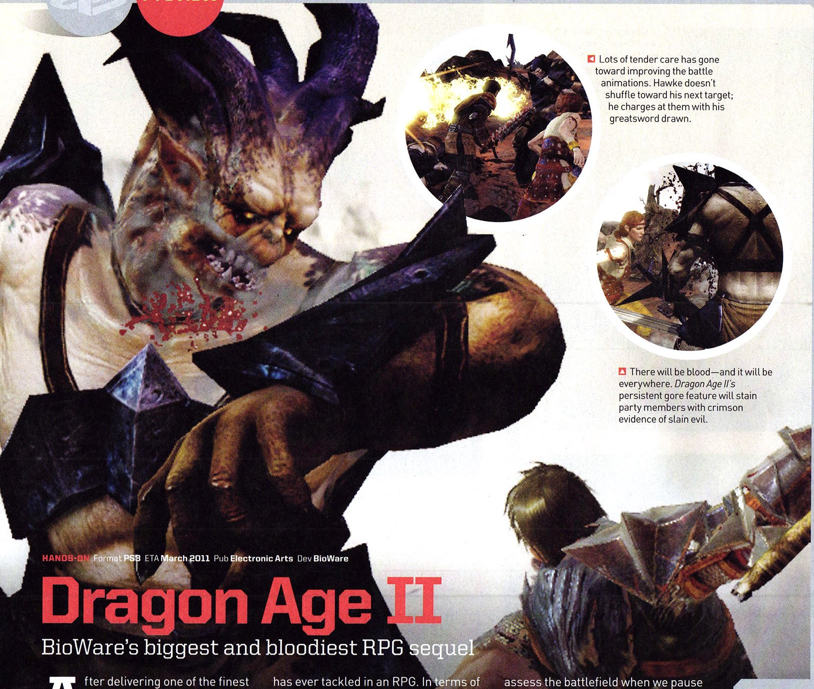
Monster mash

In the forsaken kingdom, the man with the giant monster by his side need not fear the sludge.

The immortal soldiers of darkness—creatures seemingly made of a sticky, black, tar-like substance—have taken over, and they are most assuredly not using their dominance to throw delightful tea parties and ensure that everyone has enough cake to eat. As the world cries out for a hero, it quickly gets two of them: a thief and a giant monster.

The thief, oddly, can talk to birds and rats. More importantly, he can communicate with Teotl the majin, a mythical beast that inexplicably has a tail and plants growing out of him. We take the role of the thief, sneaking about in order to initially find, then rescue the majin from his captivity. From there, *Majin and the Forsaken Kingdom* leaps off into a delightful third-person perspective combat- and puzzle-laden adventure.

We can order Teotl around: lift this, punch that, launch this at that. It's our job to keep the monstrous majin fed (which enhances his powers) and keep him safe. The earnest but simple behemoth will stoop to allow us to climb on his back to reach high ground, and cheers animatedly when we solve puzzles. By the time the game presents us with a catapult and nothing to shoot from it but our rather thin frame, *Kingdom* has worked itself into a rather goofy but endearing buddy picture in which both characters are eminently likeable. When the kingdom finally falls, Teotl and his tiny pal will have taken us on an epic ride. Kingdom hearts? Try, we heart this *Kingdom* instead. **GREG ORLANDO**



Lots of tender care has gone toward improving the battle animations. Hawke doesn't shuffle toward his next target; he charges at them with his greatsword drawn.

There will be blood—and it will be everywhere. *Dragon Age II's* persistent gore feature will stain party members with crimson evidence of slain evil.

HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **March 2011** Pub **Electronic Arts** Dev **BioWare**

Dragon Age II

BioWare's biggest and bloodiest RPG sequel

After delivering one of the finest high-fantasy role-playing games to grace consoles, it'd be easy for BioWare to simply offer more of the same with its sequel to *Dragon Age: Origins*. Instead, the developer wants to deliver something bigger and better than its predecessor.

"This time around we wanted to mix up how we were telling the story. We wanted to tell the story of the life of a man who is at the most pivotal moment in the history of *Dragon Age*, thus far. So, the story then becomes about the rise to power of one character, Hawke," lead designer Mike Laidlaw explains.

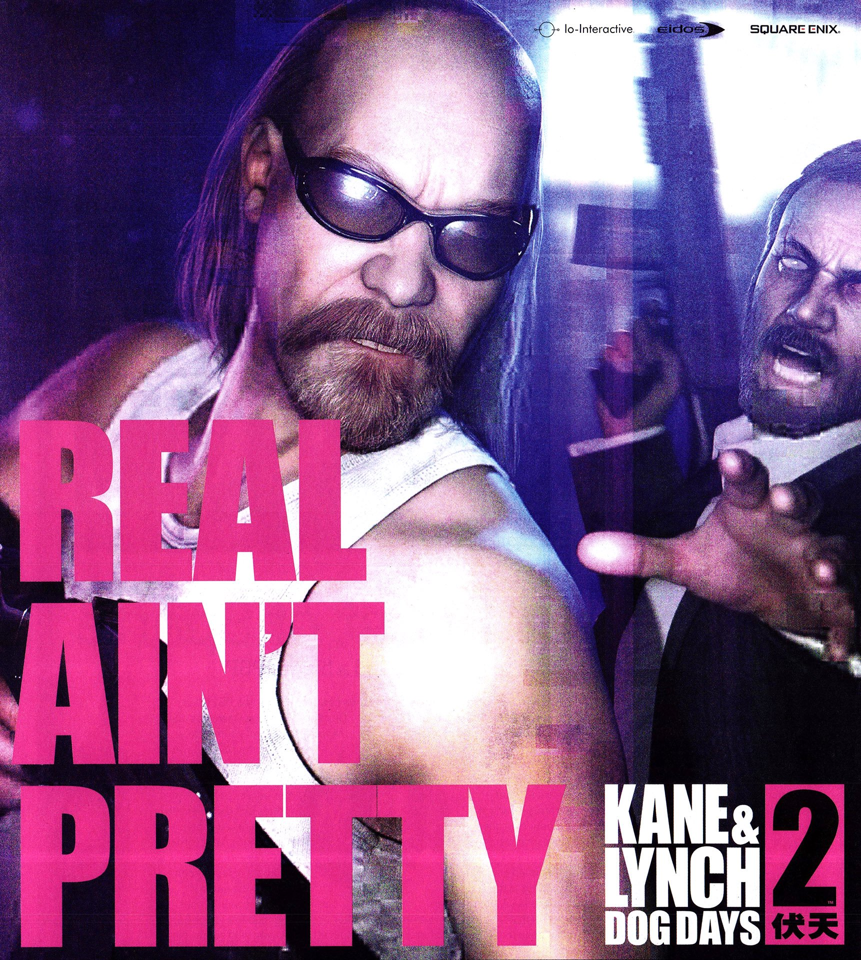
And it's the biggest story BioWare has ever tackled in an RPG. In terms of scope, *Dragon Age II's* plot spans a decade, chronicling Hawke's rise to fame. It all begins with a bloody battle in the Blight Lands where we find Hawke fleeing his hometown of Lothering with his mage sister Bethany. Thick plumes of smoke from Hawke's former home—which has been sacked by rampaging darkspawn demons—cloud the background sky as they press forward. The duo soon find themselves overrun by their pursuers.

It's here that we begin to see how BioWare has optimized *Dragon Age II's* combat system. The camera has been pulled back considerably from *Origins*. The wider view makes it easier to assess the battlefield when we pause the game to switch between party members and to queue up combat commands. Battles feel more fluid and look more furious; Hawke and Bethany quickly take down the band of darkspawn—and look great while doing it. The attack animations are more cinematic this time, with Bethany charring darkspawn to a crisp with flame spells while Hawke plows through the rest by swinging his giant broadsword with wild abandon. Of course, there's also the blood. It's everywhere, covering Hawke in a thick layer of gore—which makes for a bloody brilliant first look at what's to come. **TYLER NAGATA**

Dev Talk

"What we're doing is focusing on the characters, making sure they can convey emotion and that they can convey story and that they are the strongest thing in the game."

Mike Darrah
Executive Producer
BioWare



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- Intense Violence
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- Strong Language

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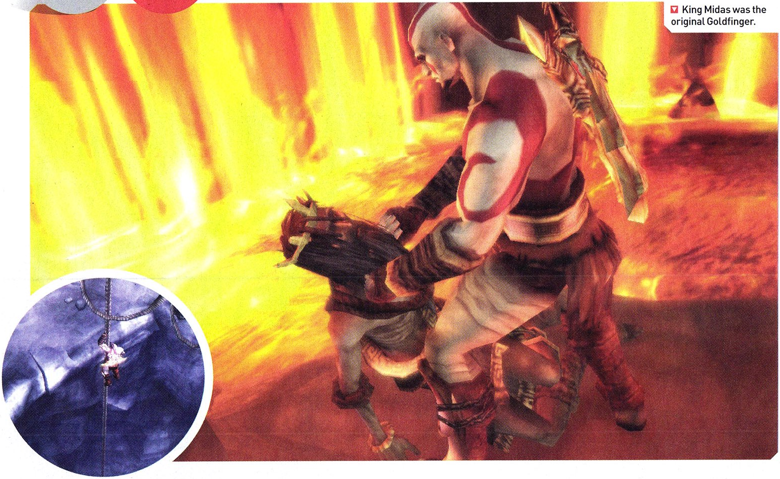


King Midas was the original Goldfinger.

HANDS-ON Format **PSP** ETA **November** Pub **SCEA** Dev **Ready at Dawn**

God of War Ghost of Sparta

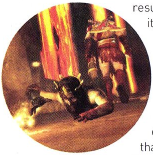
Big trouble in little Sparta? We're going to need a bigger PSP

There are few franchises that have transitioned from home console to PSP as smoothly as *God of War*. To wit: *Chains of Olympus* is the highest-rated PSP title to date and as such, news of another *God of War* title coming to the platform is unsurprising. Something more of a revelation, however, is that the developer is aiming quite a bit higher this time around.

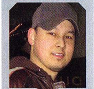
Expect about seven or so hours of slaughter.

In our hands-on demo, *Ghost of Sparta* immediately felt bigger and more epic than the game before it: Spectacular vistas and expansive arenas defy the limitations of the PSP hardware without compromising any of the smooth operation the series has become known for. There are more enemies on screen, more variety to the animations (a kill using Kratos' electrocution magic will, for example, provoke quite a different result than one using his standard blades) and more content in general. The game is essentially using every iota of power the PSP can muster, recalling the glorious end-of-lifecycle performance we saw from some late PS2 titles.

Developer Ready at Dawn has all but redone the controls completely, resulting in improved playability and combo-generation. In our demo, we took out our aggression on King Midas using some of the game's new weapons—a spear and shield combo and, more impressively, a deadly set of fire blades that modify the game's primary weapon with flames. After combining together juggles and chain attacks, along with a new "pin" tackle move and the fire blades' explosive "sticky bomb" finisher, it began to dawn on us that *Ghost of Sparta* could well become one of the PSP's finest moments. **EVAN SHAMOON**

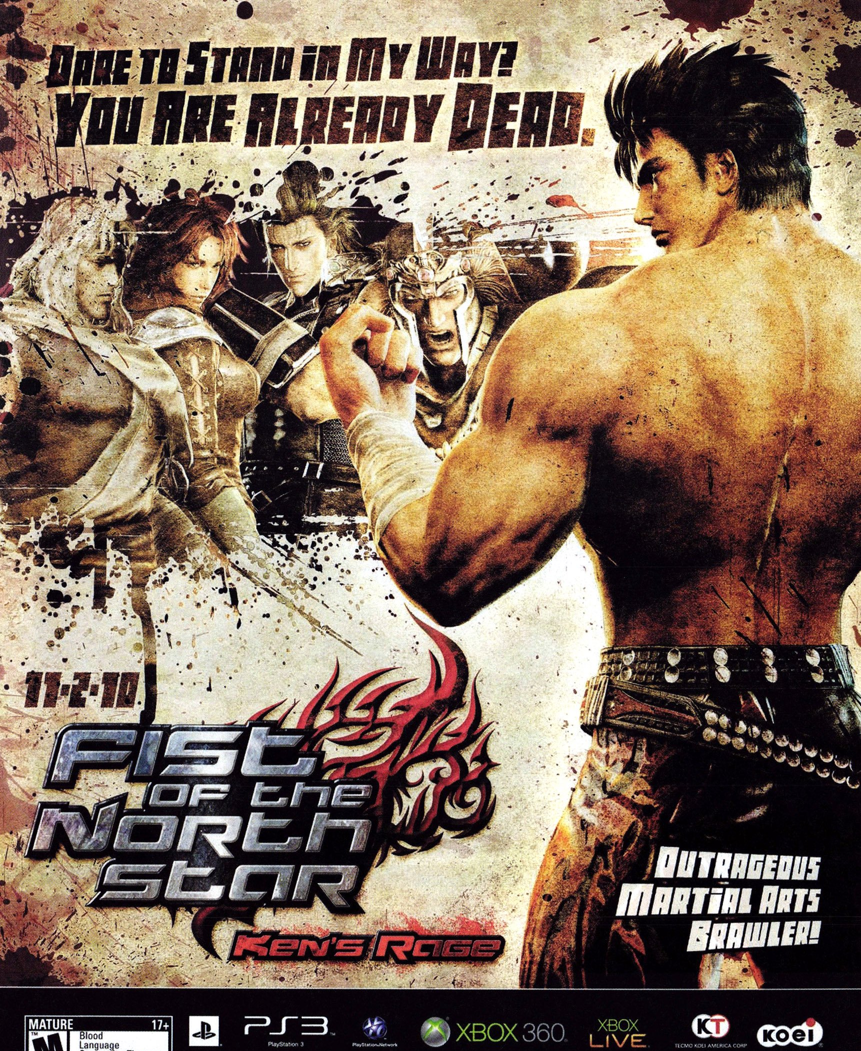


Dev Talk



"When you start really layering the effects we've brought to the game—depth of field, moving fog, the mist, etc.—you start to lose the feeling of being in a videogame."

Dana Jan
Game director
Ready at Dawn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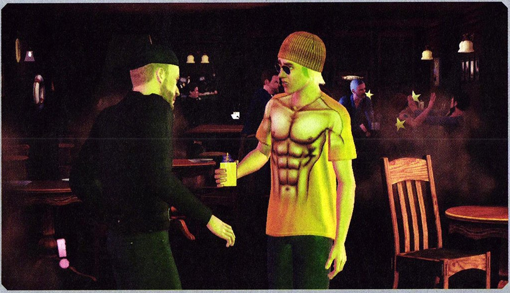
The latest on...

New shots, new games, new info

The Sims 3

Format **PS3** ETA **October** Pub **Electronic Arts**
Dev **The Sims Studio**

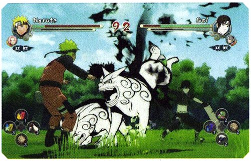
Harold the nevernude (a delightful nod to the classic yet sadly canceled television show *Arrested Development*) is about to have the cruel hand of fate come down and crush him in the manner of a foot stomping a grape. Karma needs balancing and *The Sims 3* loves its payback. Will it be boils? Poltergeists? A horrible bladder malfunction? Only time will tell, but players can experience ficklish fate firsthand with this delightful sort-of real-life simulator. Players create characters in the game, give them a host of attributes and failings, find them gainful employment, and essentially customize everything—right down to their utensil holders.



Two Worlds II

Format **PS3** ETA **October** Pub **SouthPeak**
Dev **Reality Pump**

Action role-playing game *Two Worlds II* lets us create and customize our own spells, so expect to get zapped with what SouthPeak calls "the tornado of sh–t"—an enchantment combining powerful winds and random junk falling from the sky. As Prince says, color us taken aback.



Naruto Shippuden: Ultimate Ninja Storm 2

Format **PS3** ETA **Fall** Pub **Namco Bandai**
Dev **CyberConnect2**

The as-yet-untranslated Japanese dialogue made enjoying the game's adventure aspect tricky, but *Storm 2's* one-on-one combat proved genuinely stylish and unique—once we stopped treating it like a traditional fighting game.

Blade Kitten

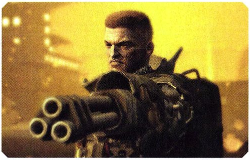
Format **PSN** ETA **September** Pub **Atari**
Dev **Krome Studios**

Cat girls with swords? Snarky bounty hunters? Cutesy anime animals? *Blade Kitten* certainly does cover a lot of ground for a webcomic-inspired action platformer, but the cutscenes drew our attention. Fans of the genre should keep their eye out for this feisty feline.

Metal Gear Solid: Rising

Format **PS3** ETA **2011** Pub **Konami**
Dev **Kojima Productions**

After witnessing his lightning-fast, acrobatic katana skills and uncanny slicing ability, we've come to the startling realization: Not only do we like Raiden, but we can't wait to witness his transformation from whiny irritating teenager to cybernetic badass.



Deus Ex: Human Revolution

Format **PS3** ETA **February 2011** Pub **Square Enix**
Dev **Eidos Montreal**

The content of the image highlights why we're excited about *Human Revolution:* transhumanism, cyberpunk, and conspiracies involving all-powerful corporations and their seemingly unstoppable minions. We can't wait to shoot, sneak, hack, and talk our way through it.

Atelier Rorona: The Alchemist of Arland

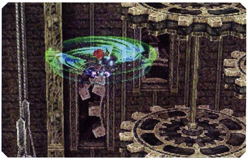
Format **PS3** ETA **September** Pub **NIS America**
Dev **Gust**

This latest entry in the *Atelier Rorona* series achieves its combat depth by allowing players to combine items they find in the wild in order create awesome stuff to beat up enemies in JRPG-style turn-based skirmishes.

Shaun White Skateboarding

Format **PS3** ETA **October** Pub **Ubisoft**
Dev **Ubisoft Montreal**

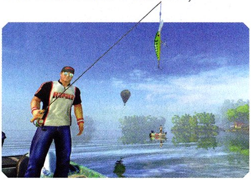
In *Shaun White Skateboarding,* skating is more a means than an end. Rather than shooting videos or owning spots like a real-life skater, players use skating to solve puzzles, trigger changes in the terrain, and free brainwashed civilians from the Orwellian clutches of The Ministry.



Ys: Oath in Felghana

Format **PSP** ETA **November** Pub **XSEED Games**
Dev **Nihon Falcom Corp**

Ys: Oath in Felghana sure feels accessible: buttonmashing action, melodramatic storytelling, magical skills and items, RPG-style stats and feedback, and a great big world that can only be fully explored once the requisite skills have been earned (a la *Castlevania* or *Metroid).*



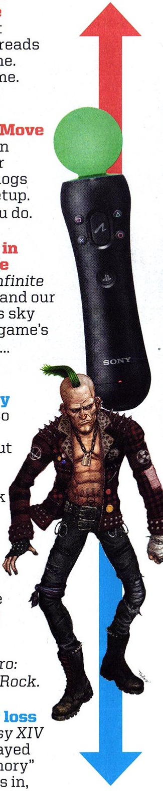
Rapala Pro Bass Fishing

Format **PS3** ETA **September** Pub **Activision**
Dev **Activision**

Make no mistake about it: A bass would love to fry up humans for dinner. That's why *Rapala Pro Bass* is not just a fine fishing simulator, but also a statement: "We're going to live on! We're going to survive! Today we celebrate our Independence Day!" Or something like that.

Gut Reaction

What's strong and what's wrong



▲ We heart David Jaffe

And not just because he reads our magazine. He's awesome. Man-crush!

▲ Smooth Move

"I have green balls," Roger says as he hogs our Move setup. Yes, Rog, you do.

▲ Splicers in spaaaaaace

BioShock: Infinite is revealed, and our hopes are as sky high as the game's new setting...

▼ Infinite controversy

...Yes, we also have our concerns, but the fan outrage over Sky-o-Shock is just silly.

▼ Grrrrrrr

The more we see of it, the more we recoil at the hackneyed storyline in *Guitar Hero: Warriors of Rock.*

▼ Memory loss

Final Fantasy XIV is being delayed due to "memory" problems. As in, we might forget to play it by the time it comes out.

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TWISTED
Mettle

Car combat smashes headlong onto PlayStation 3 in the long-awaited Twisted Metal franchise reboot

By Evan Shamoon

"If *Twisted Metal* were a child, it'd be a seriously f–ked up kid." David Jaffe is talking about his newest title, announced several months back at this year's E3. Like the rest of the series, this newest iteration is, in fact, the brainchild of Jaffe and his partner in grime, Scott Campbell, the two cofounders of development studio Eat, Sleep, Play. And after a day spent kicking the tires of their game, it's clear Jaffe and Campbell are indeed two very different personalities who make for a particularly fussy set of parents. The good news? Despite being borne into what might be a dysfunctional family, *Twisted Metal* aims to prove that a bad seed might make for the very best of game.

> **"It's a very American mentality of cars and guns and violence. I think it's a cocktail that's very appealing, and it speaks to an aggressive mentality that a lot of us have inside."** —David Jaffe

In contrast to Campbell's consistently low-key demeanor, Jaffe has the nervous energy and quick wit of a (gentile) Woody Allen, cut with the bug-eyed enthusiasm of a hyperactive 10-year-old. He's also something of an open book: Upon picking up the latest copy of this very publication, he flips immediately to the "Most Wanted" list (Issue #37, p.21) and notices that *Twisted Metal* is nowhere to be found—despite having occupied the eleventh spot just a month prior. "The only way you can read this is that E3 was so disappointing that we went from 11 to nothing," says Jaffe, throwing his hands in the air and flashing a look of despair.

This is not, of course, the only possibility, but for Jaffe—a designer with the likes of *God of War* and its sequel under his belt—the desire to meet expectations clearly remains a major driving force. Even by the end of our visit, some five hours later, he's still rather hung up on the list: "Scott, he's over it," Jaffe says, nodding toward Campbell. "He hasn't given it a second thought. Me, I'll be stressing about this for another week." Jaffe pauses. "That's why he looks the way he does, and I look like this." (Campbell is a dedicated cyclist with a physique to match.)

Jaffe is based in San Diego, while Campbell and the rest of the studio team work out of a converted loft building in Salt Lake City, Utah, where we chat today. They've worked this way for some 16 years, including their time spent developing the original *Twisted Metal* for PSone. It's a long-distance arrangement that's rare for the games industry, but serves as a functional working relationship for Jaffe and the rest of the team at Eat, Sleep, Play. "Scott's an email guy, and sometimes a phone call guy," says Jaffe of the daily routine. "If it were up to me I'd have video chat on from 9 to 5 every day. I could just never live in Utah."

Besides, points out Campbell, "Utah wouldn't let Dave live here."

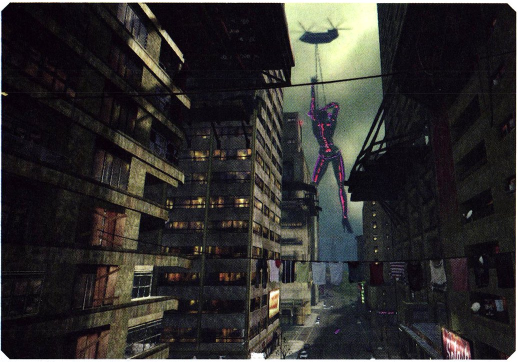
Route 666

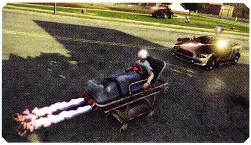
What the duo so clearly shares, however, is a prevailing interest in exploring the hyper-exaggerated fantasy of American car culture. "We did the first *[Twisted Metal]* back in '94 on PSone, and the vision is just as appealing if not more appealing to us today than it was then," says Jaffe of the decision to return to the series. "It's a very American mentality of cars and guns and violence. I think it's a cocktail that's very appealing, and it speaks to an aggressive mentality that a lot of us, and certainly Scott and I have inside us, and a lot of fans of the series share as well."

Likewise, the increased horsepower of the PS3 provided a temptation too strong to resist. "Every time there's new hardware, you can bring that graphical update along with gameplay innovations," Jaffe says. "This is our first *Twisted Metal* game built from the ground up for online multiplayer. [We can] bring the fantasy closer to reality."

Indeed, it's an attempt to refocus and reinvigorate the core ideas of the series, rather than reinvent them. "Essentially, we want to give players the experience of being in the middle of a gunfight on the freeway with helicopters flying overhead and snipers leaning out the window, and you're blowing up tanker trucks and sacrificing the enemy leader by dragging him behind your car—and it's just more of that twisted mentality that we can bring to life, because of the hardware."

Finally, far beyond mere technical motivations, Jaffe says that for him, the impetus toward *Twisted Metal* also comes largely as a reflection of mood. "My logic for jumping into *Twisted Metal* at this tone and at this time is, for one, that I don't take things as seriously as I used to. And let me say that I'm not one of these guys who's just like, 'Let's make games fun again'—I get that games can be emotional, and they can push buttons, and they can tell stories, and I think that's great, and I'd love to go back one day to making games like that." Jaffe pauses momentarily before continuing. "But I do think there's been such a swell of games that are very serious and take themselves very seriously, and are sort of dripping with earnestness. Personally, I'm kind of sick of it... I don't want to be there right now, because it feels a little pretentious and obnoxious."

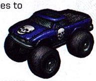




Calling All Cars: Lessons Learned

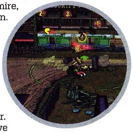
David Jaffe's most recent game, *Calling All Cars*—which was made with developer Incognito, the staff of which has now essentially become Eat, Sleep, Play—was one of PS3's earliest downloadable titles. A frantic, top-down car combat game, it performed decently ("It made its money back," says Jaffe), but wasn't the breakaway hit the team had aimed for. We spoke to Jaffe about what he learned from the experience.

1. "The biggest lesson learned from *Calling All Cars*—that probably applies to everything I will do from now on—is that you can never give the player enough content, whether they're spending $10 or $60. I think sometimes the content you put in there is nothing more than perceived value, and sometimes it's genuine value. We're working to have as many cars as we can, as many modes, as many features, as many levels, as many variations of levels, so that the player really feels like they're taken care of."



2. "Stickiness: *Calling All Cars* lacked anything from rankings to Trophies to high scores to stats. I'd still play *Calling All Cars* online (before it went offline) and I'd enjoy it for one or two games, but I just couldn't play it for more than that. It was like a piece of gum. For me, I'm very proud of what we did on that game, but it was like a really great burst of flavor and then it kinda went away after one or two games. I couldn't sit there for two or three hours and just play *CAC*. With this game, we're making sure that we give you a reason to want to come back and try to do better."

3. "It was originally meant to be much more X-rated and bawdy, full of topless joints and whatnot. That didn't happen because I was a f—king pussy and didn't push back on some people. It's always a balance when you have a group of people that you respect and admire, but they don't always see the vision. I think, especially as an early PSN title, people who had just spent $600 on a piece of hardware were probably 18 and over, and the original style would have resonated better. It felt too kiddy. It was really just a bad management mistake on my part, mixed with the user base being a bit older. I think the best decision would have been to reskin the whole f—king thing—maybe it becomes SWAT, or military, or sci-fi future...or something that speaks to the PS3 gamer."



"If you think about it, so much of car combat is about lining up your shot—just like aerial combat."
—David Jaffe

Sweet Rides

Along with what's already been revealed, we were shown one new vehicle: series fan-favorite Axel. The speedy bi-wheeled man (whose wife was murdered by Sweet Tooth) boasts the Wheel of Death as his primary weapon, which lets him smash through just about anything. Axel's secondary weapon adds to his destructive power, firing explosive spikes from his wheels. The other cars that have been revealed so far include:

Meat Wagon (ambulance)
Death Warrant (muscle car)
Junkyard Dog (tow truck)
RoadBoat ('70s-era sedan)
Spectre (high-end sports car)
Vermin (exterminator van)
Talon (helicopter)
Reaper (motorcycle)
TBA tank car
Sweet Tooth's ice cream truck

While much of the *Twisted Metal* team's focus is clearly being directed toward providing a deep multiplayer experience (more on that in a bit), the single-player campaign isn't being overlooked.

"The idea is you've got three main characters and three difficulty modes," explains Jaffe. "We wanted to get away from the rinse/repeat cycle of classic *Twisted Metal* single-player, which had a very fighting game structure: You know, kill 10 guys, kill 20 guys, go to the next level, and then do it again with another character. In this game, we want to make sure the single-player aspect of the game is forward-thinking enough."

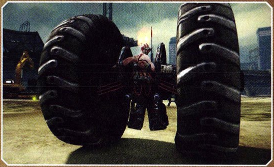
That said, "forward-thinking enough" is still relatively old school: "Everything is still based off of deathmatch," says Jaffe. "We're not trying to make 'missions;' we still want it to be very classic *Twisted Metal*. It's more about vehicle combat, it's more about mastering your weapons and your energy attacks."

We're shown several of the game's levels, which range from sprawling suburban wastelands to crumbling cities. The Times Square level, for instance, includes a trip through the Museum of Natural History, where well-placed shots can topple T-Rex and blue whale skeletons. A subway system runs underneath the level with two trains that can be either blown up or, for the more strategic gamer, used as very large and very fast weapons against other contestants. There are destruction derby-style arena levels that constantly evolve over time, in which a variety of death traps are scattered about the terrain: lava, electrified walls, spikes, sudden "lights out" moments, and switches that can be driven over to launch spectators from the comfort of their seats into the undeniable discomfort of the arena. There are chases down the sides of canyons and through canals. At one point we drive up the back of a semi to recharge our car's energy, a la *Spy Hunter*, and nearly every wall in the game can be crashed through.

In other words, don't expect anything even remotely resembling realism: While the power of the PS3 is certainly making this the most expansive, dynamic *Twisted Metal* to date—some of the levels we see today stretch far into the horizon—the experience is still one that places fun and immediacy before everything else. Cars can jump, stop on a dime, and go from 0 to 60 in a heartbeat. "We've got kind of a cross between arcadey cars and first-person-shooter humans," says Jaffe of the game's vehicles. "Whenever we've tuned the game to be realistic, it's always been a really poor play experience. If you think about it, so much of car combat is about lining up your shot—just like aerial combat. We actually think of the new *Ace Combat* game and *HAWX* as our contemporaries."

Three Car Garage

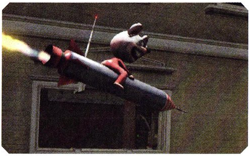
Instead of using the metaphor "lives" for the single-player campaign, each level incorporates a garage for the player. Before entering an event, the ↗



(CONTINUED) player will be able to pick anywhere from one to three cars to use, which will be stored in said garage. When the car goes back into the garage, it's protected; players will want to monitor vehicles carefully, and get them back into the garage when they're low on energy. "The main idea is to create another layer of risk-reward tension," says Jaffe. "Keeping an eye on your health, and thinking, 'Do I want to risk going into this battle, or should I try to go back to the garage and change cars?'" (The latter choice, it should be pointed out, will include the AI chasing you back to the garage.)

To illustrate, Jaffe provides an example: "If you're halfway through a chase level and you know a garage is coming up, do you want to abandon your fast car that only has about 30 percent health or do you want to try to make it to the next garage?"

The entirety of the single-player campaign can be experienced in co-op mode with another player (either local or online), in which case the garage is shared between the two players, adding another layer of tension to the proceedings. "We don't want to make a mission-based *Grand Theft Auto* game. We still want to keep the nuts-and-bolts and spirit of what *Twisted Metal* is, but add enough new wrinkles so that the player feels like he's having new experiences," says Jaffe. "For a given level, you might want, say, a small fast car, a chopper for overhead attacks, and an ice cream truck just for the hell of it."



What becomes clear right from the start of our day at Eat, Sleep, Play is that the majority of the team's focus is being aimed directly at creating a refined, addictive, and intense multiplayer experience. (The game will support splitscreen co-op, as well as two- and four-player splitscreen multiplayer offline, two-player splitscreen online, and as many as 16-players total online.)

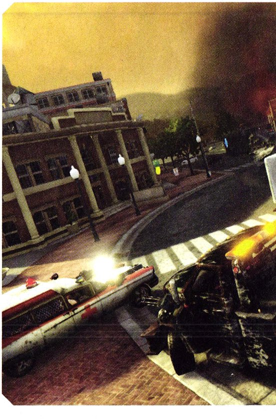
"A huge proportion of our energy is the multiplayer," says Jaffe. "Single-player and co-op are gonna be tuned and fun, the stories are going to be creepy and twisted like they've always been, but if you're looking for some grand epic adventure game or quest experience this is not what you want to be looking at. If you're looking for amazing addictive multiplayer and really cool modes and vehicles and abilities, absolutely we're the game for you."

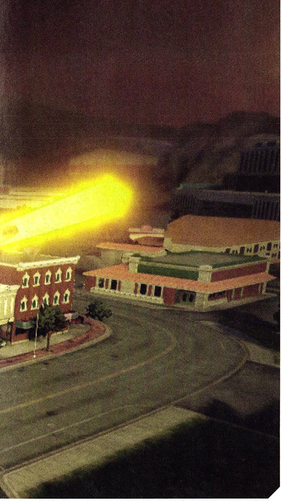
In fact, the desire to make an online shooter stems, in many ways, from Jaffe's own experience with online gaming. "Let me say we respect them, but we don't play them a lot," says Jaffe of the existing heap of online shooters. "I do like *Team Fortress* a lot, but most of the online first-person shooters are brilliant games that leave me, personally, wanting." He points to the high rate of death, and the ways in which even the intended team-based games devolve into deathmatch for most players. "So we're kinda speaking to what we think is cool about online games, which is team modes, vehicles that work together, modes where it's pretty much impossible to play if you don't play as a team. A lot of it is making sure that we, as players, get what we want out of an online shooter."

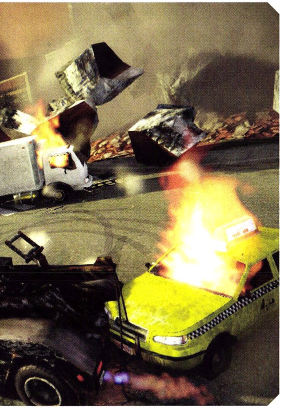
Jaffe happily recalls watching gamers come to *Twisted Metal* at this year's E3, and seeing them chase one another for as long as two minutes—a simple push and pull that takes a bit of time to see to its end. "I can't remember the last time I played an online game where I stayed alive long enough to have that kind of relationship," says Jaffe. "It harkens back to what we started making games with, which was local splitscreen. There's enough time to live in the world that you can strategize at a level that's more than just the moment-to-moment gameplay in most online shooters. Basically, we want to make a game where you're not dead every five f–king seconds."

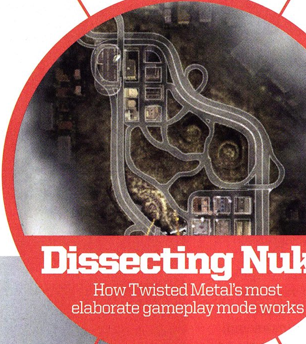
> **"A huge proportion of our energy is the multiplayer. If you're looking for amazing addictive multiplayer and really cool modes and vehicles, absolutely we're the game for you."** —David Jaffe

And that's exactly what we found in our playtest. While much work has yet to be done in terms of tuning and balance, already we can see Jaffe's vision coming to life. Playing a game of Nuke takes teamwork and cooperation—which in turn requires time and planning, something the game allows us to have. We have the *time,* for example, to explore a massive level without being destroyed as we round every corner. We have the *ability* to plan our assaults, switching at one point to the helicopter Talon to fly up to our enemy's leader while avoiding the scrum below, then later using Meat Wagon to protect an ally while buffing him with health (Meat Wagon is an ambulance, after all). Later, in a standard deathmatch, we ended up locked in a heated exchange with an anonymous tester in another room chasing each other around for several minutes. Even at this early stage, the control is tight, easy to learn, and intuitive—necessities, of course, for the game to gather the active community it requires for online success.









Dissecting Nuke

How Twisted Metal's most elaborate gameplay mode works

1. Take us to your leader

In every level, the enemy leader is located somewhere inconvenient, and he or she happens to be manning a turret. Each side can deploy some vehicles to rush the leader while holding others back to protect their own boss.

2. Life's a grind

Once captured, the enemy leader must be dragged to a missile launcher then held within a small circle for a set amount of time until the launcher charges. Once fully charged, the leader is fed into the launcher, triggering a guided missile. Easier said than done when being attacked at all times, from all angles...

3. Shoot to kill

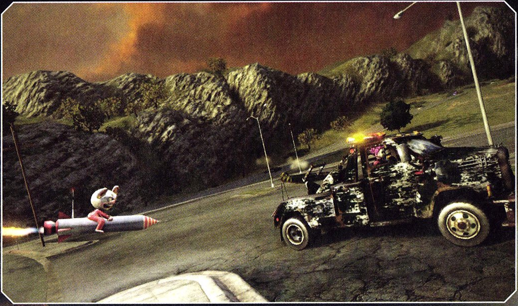
That missile we worked so hard to trigger? It's not a sure shot. We still have to steer the projectile through the city and around unfriendly fire from below and–if our foe has Talon deployed–from above. The target? A floating statue of the enemy's faction leader.

4. Rinse, repeat

Because once isn't enough, we have to do this three times. Adding to the fun: Some levels have mobile missile launchers, others have moving faction statues. Add in 16 players and the astounding range of weapons and vehicles, and this easily becomes one of the most complex multi-player modes we've ever encountered on PS3–one with tons of addictive potential.

Character flaws

As mentioned, each of the three chapters belongs to an individual character with each of these broken up into five events and an end boss. There's an intro movie and a series of three different end movies for each character, which vary based on the difficulty level the chapter is played on. These movies are essentially live action: human actors are being filmed against green screens and placed into realistic CG backgrounds, inspired by the cinematic achievements of *300* and *Watchmen*. Sweet Tooth, for example—the menacing, maniacal clown who's been on the cover of every *Twisted Metal* game to date—comes to life in a series of what are essentially short films. These center around "the one who got away"—namely, the first girl Sweet Tooth failed to kill. Without giving anything away, we'll just say that the scenes are brutal and disturbing...as one would expect from a story about a psycho murderer in love with the one girl he failed to kill. "The phrase 'the one that got away' has many different meanings and outcomes, depending on which difficulty you win Sweet Tooth's story," says Jaffe.

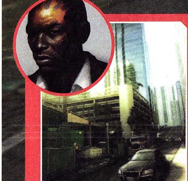


As we bounce through the game's various modes and levels, Jaffe is constantly excusing the unfinished state of things—a blank sign here, an untextured polygon there. "Look, I'm so grateful and so happy you guys are here," he says at one point. "But if it were up to me, nobody would see the game until the day it launches. Because I know everything that's wrong and it drives me batty."

When asked about his fears in bringing together this latest *Twisted Metal* saga, Jaffe is pleasantly forthcoming. "My first worry is, Can we get there? Can we make you go: 'Holy f–k, I loved *Twisted Metal* because the multiplayer is just an absolute breath of fresh air and it's a joy to play.' And we're not there yet. Do I think we won't? No, of course, I think we'll get there. But that's one of the things that keeps me up at night."

He's also well aware of the fact that his game doesn't quite fit with the rest of Sony's first-party lineup: *Killzone, Heavy Rain,* even *God of War*—the series Jaffe himself played a huge part in creating. "There's some old-fashioned thinking at play here, for sure," he says of *Twisted Metal.* "The other thing that keeps me up at night is that you always want a hit, you want something that resonates with a lot of gamers. And right now the landscape is changing and has changed. Is there still room for a game that's about pure gameplay? In this day and age where every PS3 first-party exclusive is basically a cinematic adventure experience, will the audience show up for good old-fashioned gameplay? I don't know. Yes, I'm neurotic. And, no, you never get used to it. God knows I don't. Oh, and failure scares me. Failure scares the f–k out of me."

It's a refreshing display of humility, a willingness to expose vulnerability in an industry that often deals only in bravado, exclamation points, and towing the PR line. "Listen, every game needs a reason to be made," says Jaffe. "I'd love to sell 5 million copies. But if we sell 50,000 copies and we go down as this game that really delivers on that core multiplayer experience, I will be happy. I think this game, all neuroses aside, really does represent some of the best design we've done. I think it's going to be a fantastic multiplayer game. When it's done, I will proudly put it toe-to-toe with any multiplayer game out there, because I really have faith in what we're doing."



Scrap Metal

The *Twisted Metal* reboot began in a very different place. "We started with a very sleek, sexy, stylish universe that nobody would look at and think, 'that's the new *Twisted Metal*,'" Campbell says. "More likely, they'd think it was *Midnight Club* or something. It was a cool style, but it wasn't really sitting well with us. There was a lot of pressure on Dave and I to give the game more international appeal and so we came up with an art style that would cross the different territories. We also wanted to take a big jump, like we did with *Twisted Metal: Black* on PS2." Here's a peek at what could have been, along with the aborted re-envisioning of Sweet Tooth.

> "Yes, I'm neurotic. And, no, you never get used to it. God knows I don't. Oh, and failure scares me. Failure scares the f-k out of me."
> –David Jaffe

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FRIENDLY

How **Call of Duty: Black Ops** will sucker punch the most popular online multiplayer with a fistful of fun

By Scott Butterworth

Revolution. We gamers so often demand it, insisting developers innovate at every given opportunity. And in a market oversaturated with half-hearted sequels and by-the-numbers shooters desperately clinging to every passing trend (Zombies! Co-op! Oh my!), our rallying cry for change feels entirely justified.

Fortunately for us, *Call of Duty: Black Ops* developer Treyarch has chosen to ignore that cry. And rightly so. It realizes it's possible to iterate within an existing formula and produce a fresh, exciting experience without disregarding everything that made the franchise great in the first place. Armed with clever and addictive new modes, borderline silly but ultimately badass new weapons, and a set of customization options we can't believe we lived without for so long, Treyarch's latest effort recently held us hostage in a dark, stuffy office...and it was the most fun we've had playing *Call of Duty* in years.

Black Ops' basic gameplay feels remarkably similar to *Modern Warfare 2* (as opposed to Treyarch's last entry in the *CoD* series, *World at War)* both in terms of playstyle and quality—a testament to the fact that the studio doesn't deserve to live entirely in the shadow of highly esteemed *Warfare 2* developer Infinity Ward. Aiming, movement, even the graphics feel completely on par with the current reigning champ of the online world. It certainly helps that the game's 40-plus weapons bear marked similarities to the guns found in *Warfare 2,* as many are the Vietnam-era prototypes or predecessors of firearms still used in modern-day combat.

Warfare 2's essential leveling structure also remains intact. In fact, it's largely been the focus of Treyarch's three-pillared approach to expanding *Call of Duty's* vaunted multiplayer. Its mantra? Customization, competition, and creativity.

Format **PS3** | ETA **November** | Pub **Activision** | Dev **Treyarch**

FIRE

▲ For the first time, *Call of Duty* has a currency system. Players can now buy all manner of gear for their maniacal clown armies.

Customization

"[Real-life] Black ops units were able to modify their weaponry and customize their loadouts," Treyarch studio head Mark Lamia explains as we suit up for our first match. "That was perfect because one of the things the team really wanted to do was extend Create-A-Class."

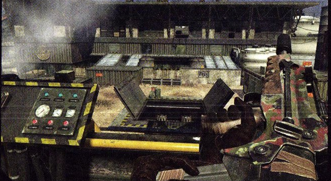
As part of that effort, *Black Ops* features an in-game currency system—a first for a *CoD* game. Now any time we so much as fire a shot during an online match, we gain both experience points *and* currency. And instead of a linear unlock chain with preset rewards tied to particular ranks, we'll be able to purchase new items and upgrades in any order we choose. Most items can only be purchased once we gain an appropriate amount of experience, but this system still gives us much greater freedom in how we choose to grow our characters.

> "PLAYERS CAN EXPERIENCE THE GAME THE WAY THEY WANT TO, NOT THE WAY WE TOLD THEM TO." —Mark Lamia, Treyarch studio head

Naturally, the developers have provided us with plenty of new toys to spend our newly minted cash on, most of which help us carve a unique role for our soldier. Our loadout capacity has been increased to include a new "equipment" category containing tools such as motion sensors, jammers, and our favorite: the camera spike, which replaces the mini-map with a real-time image of the area surrounding the placeable camera. There are also new killstreak rewards, including an explosive radio-controlled car, screen-guided missile, and attack chopper, all of which are actually player-controlled.

But the most important upgrades are, as always, perks. This time we can utilize one from each of three tiers: The first defines our playstyle (with five choices from sniper to heavy assault), the second provides a weapons-based upgrade, and the third grants a special ability. The first perk also dictates our player model so teammates can see how we'll be playing. But despite the designated looks assigned to each character type, we can still customize our appearance by purchasing camo patterns for primary weapons, designing unique emblems and clan tags to display on equipment, or even smearing on custom face paint.

▼ Character progression, in-game experience bonuses, killstreak rewards, custom loadouts—nearly every facet of the leveling system has been expanded.



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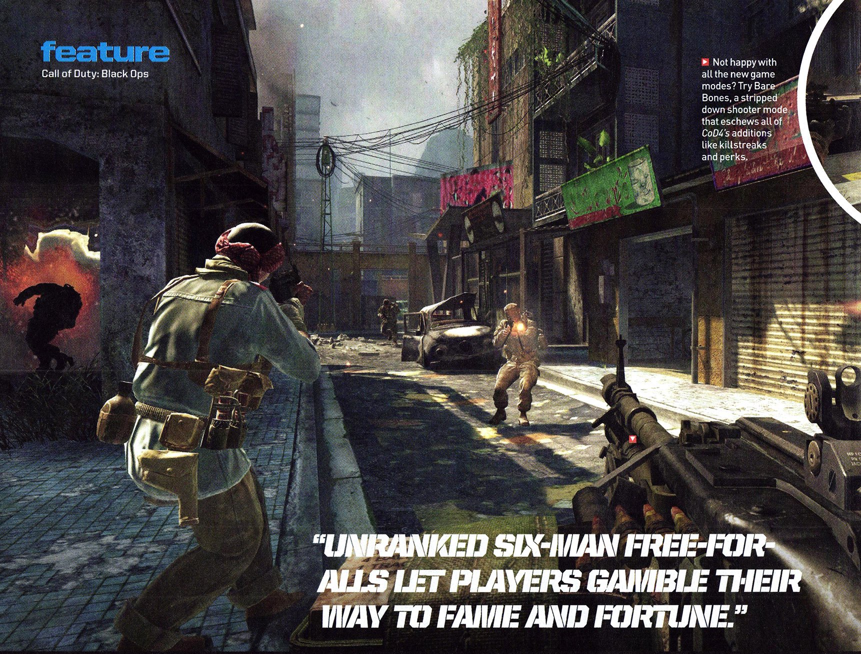


Not happy with all the new game modes? Try Bare Bones, a stripped down shooter mode that eschews all of *CoD4's* additions like killstreaks and perks.

> "UNRANKED SIX-MAN FREE-FOR-ALLS LET PLAYERS GAMBLE THEIR WAY TO FAME AND FORTUNE."

Betting also plays a big role in this game. Right now, we're betting someone will be shot.

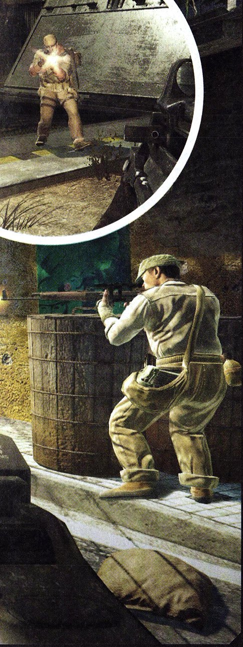
Competition

The advent of the currency system brings with it not just new ways to spend cash but new ways to earn it, the most intriguing of which are the all-new Wager Matches. These unranked six-man free-for-alls let players gamble their way to fame and fortune. Buy-ins range from penny tables to high stakes, but first, second, and third place finishers all get paid. The catch? There's no Create-A-Class. Each of the four modes operates under a very unique set of rules, which means everyone must enter on a level playing field.

By far the most exhilarating new mode is Gun Game: Every player starts the round with the same gun. Every time we get a kill, we're instantly upgraded to a new gun, but if we get knifed, we're demoted one weapon. There are 20 guns in total, starting with pistols then moving to shotguns, automatics, sniper rifles, and so on. The first player to score a kill with every gun wins. Just remember: Move past the first few guns quickly or get left behind.

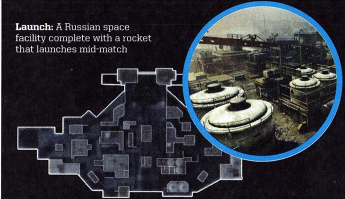
The Gun Game mode lets players acquire a new weapon each time they score a kill.

Next we have Sticks and Stones, a battle for points that focuses on *Black Ops'* new collection of sharp, pointy projectiles: the crossbow, which fires arrows with explosive tips; the tomahawk, which loosely replaces *Warfare 2's* throwing knives; and the ballistic knife, which launches its

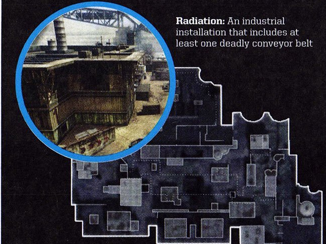


MAPS

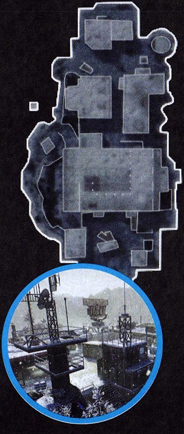
Call of Duty: Black Ops features 14 full multiplayer maps, and Treyarch promises many more will follow as DLC. Here's a quick taste of what's to come.



Launch: A Russian space facility complete with a rocket that launches mid-match



Radiation: An industrial installation that includes at least one deadly conveyor belt



Summit: A snow-covered command center with plenty of advantageous high ground

deadly blade with the touch of a button. Kills with the crossbow and ballistic knife are worth 100 points, kills with the regular melee knife are worth 25, and kills with the tomahawk are worth 10 but also bankrupt the other player.

In One In the Chamber, every player starts with one pistol, one bullet, three lives, and every shot is an instant kill. Every time we take someone down, we earn one more bullet, which means we can build a nice little bullet collection by knifing people instead of shooting them. (As an aside, we're concerned this mode will encourage camping, but everyone behaved during our playtest so maybe we're just being paranoid.)

Finally there's Sharpshooter: Everyone spawns with a random weapon and attachment (one of several hundred possible combinations). The game then swaps that weapon with a new random gun every 45 seconds. Every kill grants a new perk, so we can earn up to six simultaneous perks as long as we keep our killstreak alive. Plus, once we hit the sixth, we get double the points for every kill (though the last weapon in each round yields double points for everyone).

Each of these modes adds something fresh to the *CoD* experience by applying dramatically new structures to the classic gameplay. And in our hands-on experience, the results were completely addictive.

Of course, these aren't the only new ways to play in *Black Ops.* Combat Training allows newcomers to develop their skills outside of the brutality of online play by creating mock matches against scalable practice dummies. Players can also purchase "contracts," which add objectives (like, say, get three tomahawk kills without dying) to standard online matches. If players meet the objectives, they make a little cash. If not, they simply forfeit whatever currency they paid in the first place.

Creativity

Treyarch's last major addition in *Black Ops* is a video recording suite that not only documents and saves every online match automatically, but also allows players to edit the results.

"Everything is exactly the way it was when you play the game…except it's paused," Lamia says. We can view replays from the perspective of any player who participated in the match or we can position a free-roaming camera wherever we like. Once we're satisfied with the view, we can create tips in real time, speed up or slow down the action, and even add transitions between shots. The final product can then be saved to our public "file share," a searchable database for all of the clips we've created or downloaded.

My Take

"Being able to instantly jump in and enjoy the Wager Matches addressed one of my biggest problems with *Call of Duty.*"

Scott Butterworth
Assistant Editor
PTOM

ShaunWhite
SKATEBOARDING
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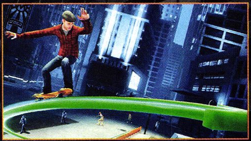
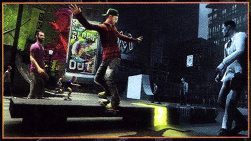
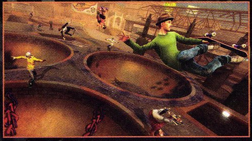


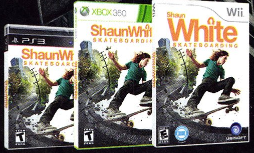
Extend Handrails.



Morph Terrain.



Play Online.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"The most important thing about the light.is that even in complete darkness, we can track it. The color is dictated by the game. It can be used as a feedback mechanism, like in *Sorcery* where it changes color depending on what spell you're casting."

Richard Marks, Sony's senior researcher for PlayStation Move tech

"There's a lithium ion battery inside that's recharged by a normal USB cable. It's eight to 10 hours depending on how it's used."

Richard Marks on Move's battery

Everything you need to know about

PlayStat

"A lot of the hardcore people don't even pay attention to Move. They just assume it's a casual experience. I mean, it is good at that but that's half of the story. The other half is that we care about our core audience."

Richard Marks on Move's perception

"The Move tracks between two- and 10-feet, but probably about six- or seven-feet away is the optimum distance. You get the best feeling there. You can move your arms as much as you want and still be tracked."

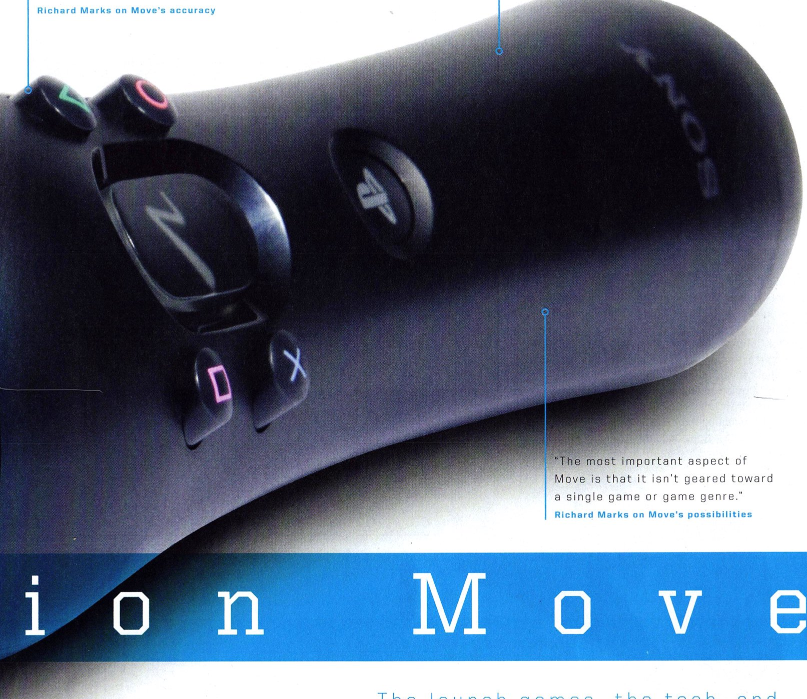
Richard Marks on Move's range

"Move can do really fine, precise motion. You can push objects away or gently tap them. But we also do traditional motion control, like big swipes and swings, but with incredible accuracy."

Richard Marks on Move's accuracy

"Not all games should be played with Move, but I think there's a lot of games that could benefit from being designed to support it."

Richard Marks on Move's software



"The most important aspect of Move is that it isn't geared toward a single game or game genre."

Richard Marks on Move's possibilities

ion Move

The launch games, the tech, and the future—all in one place

Move is an incredible piece of technology. With far more precision than both the Wii remote and Microsoft's forthcoming Kinect, it'll appeal to both hardcore and casual gamers. It's as good for a hardcore shooter as it is for a sports title or mini-games collection.

Across these pages are everything anyone needs to know about Move. We review all of the key launch games, explain the inner workings of the hardware, and even talk in detail with Sony's senior researcher Richard Marks, the man who invented the peripheral.

It's easy to write motion controllers off as a fad, but after trying out the Move for the first time it's clear the control scheme is not just another pretender to the throne. The feeling of reaching into a TV screen is something gamers must experience, and will definitely be moved by.

Sports Champions

A technical showcase with depth to match

We'll cut straight to the chase. Is the sword fighting any good? Yes, it's very good. Using a Move controller in each hand to control an on-screen character's sword and shield, every gesture—no matter how subtle or broad—translates with stunning accuracy.

Blades of Fury

That total, real-world control translates into gameplay both immediately accessible and disarmingly deep. It feels like being in *Soulcalibur*, but with fluid attacks and parries at a warrior's disposal rather than pre-set moves. Built around knocking a foe off balance and exploiting breaks in their defenses, Gladiator Combat is a fast but tactical mini-game of thoughtful aggression and spatial control, given a gameplay boost with juggle combos and superpowered strikes.

Archery is a highlight too. Using both arms to mime the reloading, aiming, and drawing of a bow may seem gimmicky, but in practice it's an empowering mechanic allowing for immediate (and satisfying) control.

The Frisbee-throwing disc-golf initially seems limited, but the control variables allow for suitable depth when properly explored. Similarly, the sedate, crown green-style action of the ball-tossing bocce belies a writhing snake pit of physics to master—both in-game and in terms of a player's body control. It's amazing how complex throwing a ball can be. Table Tennis might be a more obvious choice, but Move's recreation feels like a decent exercise in tactical control that doesn't deserve comparisons with *Wii Sport Resort's* offering.

Aside from multiplayer freeplay, *Champions* also has a robust single-player campaign. Every event has several 10-stage tournaments spread over different medal brackets. Some throw up new game variants along the way (archery adds moving targets and a shot-activated ability to block an opponent's target with a shield) with progression earning new tricks, costumes, and equipment.

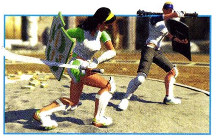
There's plenty to like here, not the least of which is the developer's thoughtfulness in selecting the game's challenges. Including gladiatorial combat and disc-golf was inspired—a breakfast of champions, we might dare suggest.

PlayStation 8

Pub **SCEA** | Dev **SCEA**

Shoot to Thrill

We shot an arrow in the air. It fell to Earth, we know not where. It was, however, darn fun.



STABALOT **Shields can be used to bash an opponent and disorient him, paving the way for a free hit on his exposed flesh.**

> "The only benefit of the Navigation Controller is that it's designed to be held in one hand; otherwise it has the same functionality as the DualShock." **Richard Marks on Move's Navigation Controller**

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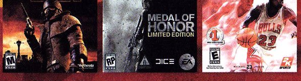
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Start the Party

Turn out the lights, the party's over...

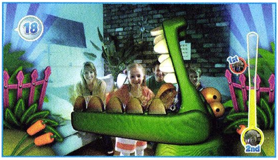
Not to put too fine a point on it, *Start the Party* is exactly what the PlayStation Move shouldn't be about. It might use a camera and a PS3, but Move's capabilities are light-years ahead of those of the old EyeToy so wasting them on a bunch of crusty old EyeToy games makes less sense than prescribing lobotomies for a headache.

What we have in *Party* is not so much a collection of fun, smart mini-games, but rather a flimsy set of easily forgotten exercises in arm waving. Bugs appear onscreen and Move is swung around to swat them. Outlines of shapes appear requiring motion to paint them in. Little men parachute down the screen toward a shark-infested sea and it's necessary to swipe a fan in order to push them to safety.

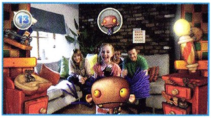
There's nothing wrong with simple fun, but *Party's* games are so basic and devoid of nuance that there's little fun to be had under any circumstance. Multiplayer action could have been a great draw, but *Party* eschews frantic elbow-jabbing silliness by only allowing one player at a time. Factor in the utterly charmless presentation and the obnoxious announcer's voice-over and it all adds up to a weak *and* generic launch title. Sadly, this party will end quickly and the guests will leave unsatisfied.

PlayStation 5

Pub **SCEA** | Dev **Super Massive**



Bug Me Not
Smashing bugs in this electronic endeavor only angers our future insect overlords and is not recommended here. Consider this a friendly warning.



Buzz Cut This mini-game requires players to shave this little guy's head. Bonus points are awarded for a Moe Howard haircut.

> "A lot of people at E3 were surprised that Move was as good as it was. There's still a lot of people who think it's exactly the same as the Wii, and they don't realize that because we have the camera we can track much more of what you're doing. So the more people try it, the better it is for us, because everyone seems to be more positive after they've played it." **Richard Marks on Move's reception**

Kung-Fu Rider

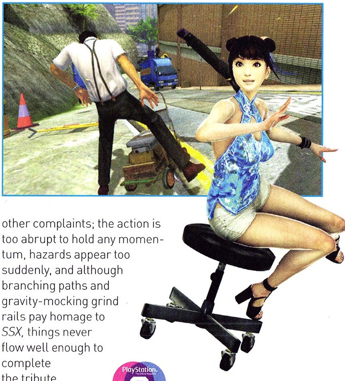
Everybody was kung-fu riding

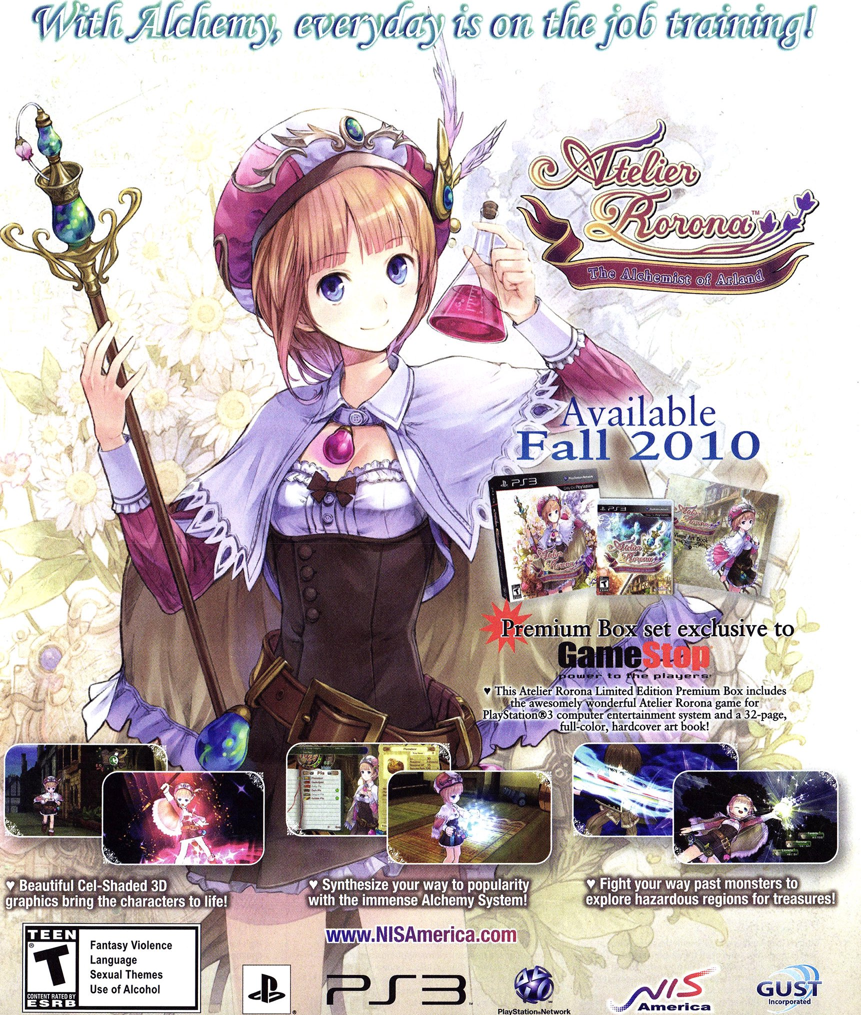
On paper, *Kung-Fu Rider* is gaming gold. A Japanese private eye has to escape from a Yakuza-riddled city by rattling through its rollercoaster streets on a variety of rickety wheeled objects. He can boost, jump, limbo under hazards, and when all else fails smash his way through danger with a Stephen Chow film's worth of cartoon kung fu.

Steering is performed with sideways sweeps of Move, while upward flicks cover jumping, and a downward punt acts as the accelerator. It's responsive enough, but given the twitch-happy nature of the gameplay, a DualShock might have worked better. We have other complaints; the action is too abrupt to hold any momentum, hazards appear too suddenly, and although branching paths and gravity-mocking grind rails pay homage to *SSX*, things never flow well enough to complete the tribute.

PlayStation 6

Pub **SCEA** | Dev **SCEA**





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Language
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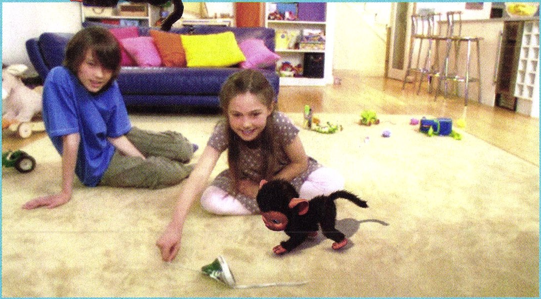
EyePet

This friend won't ruin the carpets



EyePet scampers and gambols merrily. It squeals and squeaks in delight. As a weird fusion of dog, cat, and monkey, it's been designed by cuteness experts well versed in the art of heartstring tugging.

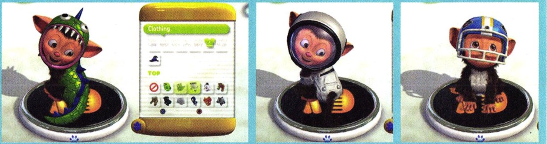
Our Pal, Virtually

The idea of a virtual pet has been done before, notably with Sega's *Seaman* and Bandai's *Tamagotchi*. Yet EyePet is neither worthy of a sharpened stick in its brain (as Seaman was) nor a virtual drain on its owner's intelligence quotient, as the Tamagotchi was. Instead, this EyePet is friendly and bountifully charming; its behaviors are wholly manipulative, but that's just because Sony wants everyone to keep coming back.

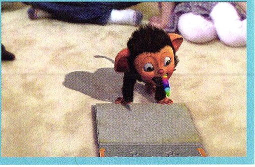
After hatching, the EyePet can be named and groomed. A medical scanner of sorts can check to see if it's well fed, creatively stimulated, and muscularly sound. Stinky EyePets can be shampooed and hosed down and every activity requires some new movement in order to complete. The problem here is that the game's actions are not wholly engaging for both parties. The EyePet loves the heck out of bouncing up and down on a trampoline, but players will be bored into a stupor at the prospect of having to shift their hand slightly to readjust the platform. Still, the wee beast's perpetual expressions of joy and the simple pleasures inherent in keeping the darn thing hale and hearty are not easily denied. In fact, this may well be love. But not in a creepy way.

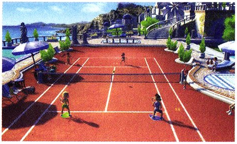
Pub **SCEA** | Dev **SCEA** | ETA **Sept**

PlayStation 7



Critter Cosplay Unlike real animals, dressing up virtual pets brings no residual societal shame. Well, maybe some.



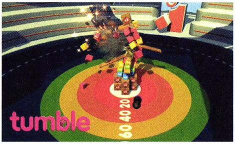


Racquet Sports

Courtly love begins and dies with Ubisoft's *Racquet Sports*, an exploration of all things ball-centric. The game offers four-player action and whacking in five flavors. This Wii-retread gets a second life courtesy of the Move controls and the results are passable yet ultimately forgettable.

Pub **Ubisoft** | Dev **Asobo**

PlayStation 6

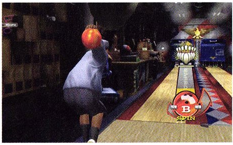


Tumble (PSN)

A clever construction/destruction game, *Tumble* manages to make block manipulation seem somewhat more than an idiot's endeavor. The challenge comes from manipulating blocks in 3D space, but the fun emerges when it's time to blow towers up. Take this for a tumble.

Pub **SCEA** | Dev **Supermassive**

PlayStation 8



High Velocity Bowling (PSN)

High Velocity Bowling spins anew with Move controls and the results are wholly palatable. Bowling requires skill and careful application of physics, and with the Move controls it's easy to exhibit precision on the lanes. A dude can abide with this bowling.

Pub **SCEA** | Dev **Team Ramrod**

PlayStation 7

Heavy Rain

The Origami Killer has a new lease on life

Rain just got heavier and, to be fair, a lot cooler with Move controls. *Heavy Rain* has been patched to allow for Move support, and the precise movements of, erm, Move are a natural fit in this moody, atmospheric tale of a serial killer.

She's So Heavy

To us it always felt a little strange to make Ethan and company move by squeezing the accelerator but Move looks set to make *Heavy Rain* more of an organic experience.

Mundane tasks such as laying the plates out feel just right when done with the motion controller, and even the more intense bits, like fighting the no-goodnik who tries to rough up Lauren, feel more immersive (if slightly less precise). Heck, even Shelby's throaty coughs can be felt via rumblings in the Move controller.

Thankfully, it won't be necessary to shell out extra money to take this one out for a second spin as the Move integration is coming via a free patch update for people who already own *Heavy Rain*. An early playtest hinted the controls weren't perfectly tuned, but we suspect more responsive, natural controls will be in place by the time the patch releases.

Pub **SCEA** | Dev **Quantic Dream** | ETA **Q4**

Free Rain We welcome a free Move patch for *Heavy Rain*, provided it adds genuine value and not just gimmicks.

Heroes on the Move

A dream team of Sony icons join forces

Jak, Daxter, Ratchet, Clank, Sly, and Bentley together in one kick-ass game? Yes, please. It might sound a bit cluttered when compared to each of the pairing's dedicated titles, but *Heroes on the Move* looks as if it's going to end up being solid fun regardless.

Move controls let players chop with Ratchet's wrench, Sly Cooper's hook, and even guide projectiles as the heroes mash their way through typically cartoon enemies. From what we've seen most of the game looks set to take place in a *Ratchet & Clank*-style futuristic universe with platforming and rail grinds. But as the plot revolves around a madman stealing parts of each hero's worlds, we wouldn't be surprised to see cameos from Jak and Sly's universes.

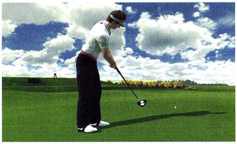
The multiplayer aspects only add to our optimism. As long as there's substance to the slash and gameplay, this could be another solid reason to grab hold of Move.

Pub **SCEA** | Dev **Nihilistic** | ETA **TBD 2011**

SOCOM 4: U.S. Navy SEALs

Sony's tactical shooter makes an epic return next year and Move already looks set to revolutionize the shooting. *SOCOM 4* not only looks far more action-based, it also allows would-be commanders to aim weapons *and* expertly move their troops around the battlefield with the motion controller.

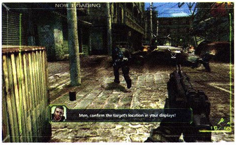
Pub **SCEA** | Dev **Zipper Interactive** | ETA **Q1 2011**



Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11

Finally a chance to be just like Tiger. No, that doesn't mean using the Move for sexy mini-games. The game demonstrator at Sony's E3 press conference embarrassed himself by missing his first swing with Move, but practice makes perfect. Expect control levels to range from sim to more casual difficulties.

Pub **EA Sports** | Dev **EA Tiburon** | ETA **September**



Time Crisis: Razing Storm

As The Who says, there's no crisis. Instead, Namco Bandai serves up gunfighting aplenty with three separate shootathons. Although the *Time Crisis'* are absolutely smashing, the buccaneer-and-skeleton laden *Deadstorm Pirates* steals the show with cannon fights and sheer insanity.

Pub **Namco Bandai** | Dev **Namco Bandai** | ETA **October**

tablets

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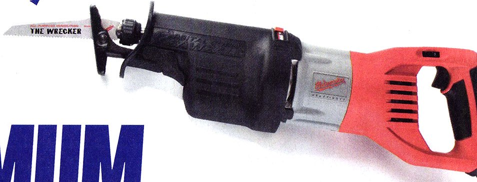
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PlayStation
The Official Magazine

Reviews

Your essential guide to new releases

Welcome. Welcome to the brand-new PTOM reviews section. This is where the harsh light of criticism hits electronic entertainment and no quarter is asked for or given. The idea here is that games cost money and no one wants to waste good money on bad games. Giving out high scores like candy serves no one, and we'd rather be fair and honest (and sometimes harsh when it's appropriate) than beloved for our ability to slap an overinflated score on a critique of a game. We'll celebrate greatness, lament mediocrity, and flush crap.

We'll always strive to be specific in our criticisms to point out what works and what fails in order to give a clear, insightful picture of a game as a whole, and we won't buy into style over substance.

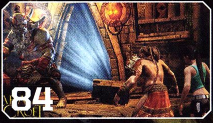
Now. With that in mind, the bile has begun to flow. Spleens will be vented here as the PTOM staff and its cadre of elite critics jump into the fire with a host of big PlayStation 3 offerings: *Madden NFL 11, NHL 11, Mafia II, Lara Croft and the Guardian of Light, Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions, Front Mission Evolved,* and *Tom Clancy's HAWX 2.* Here, there be reviews.

78

MAFIA II
2K Games keeps it all in the family in this crime- and bullet-ridden jaunt through post-war New York…er, Empire Bay.

80

HAWX 2
Flying might have gotten pricier, but one thing's for certain: They won't be charging $8 for a sandwich on this flight.



84

LARA CROFT
Truly, it was the breast of times. But has plucky archaeologist Lara Croft seen the light or merely tumbled in the muck?

How we score our reviews…

10 Awesome
Instant classic that's nearly PlayStation perfection.

9 Excellent
Highly recommended and a great investment.

8 Great
Wonderful yet still possessed of minor flaws.

7 Good
Enjoyable, but with definite room for improvement.

6 Acceptable
A decent offering, but one that only satisfies in places.

5 Mediocre
A game that's both fun and frustrating in equal measure.

4 Flawed
Too flawed to be anything more than a curiosity.

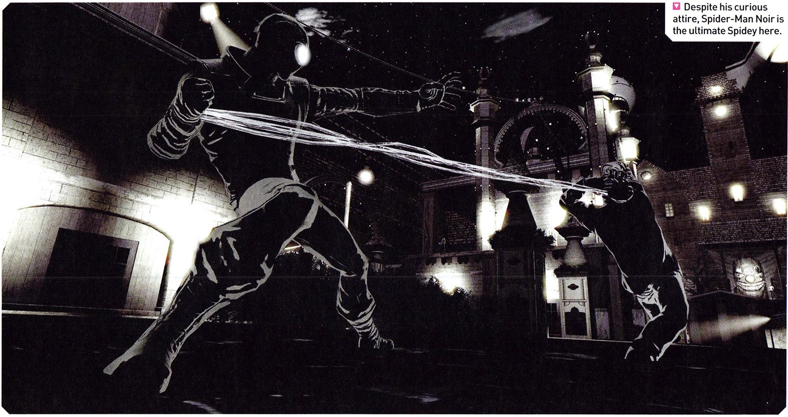
3 Poor
A seriously defective game with no long-term appeal.

2 Awful
A disgrace to the bargain bin. Avoid it like the plague.

1 Raw Sewage
Apparently, feces *can* be pressed on a disc.

GOLD AWARD
PlayStation
The Official Magazine

Our Highest Accolade
The gold award is presented to any game that we feel demonstrates significant innovation, near flawless gameplay, great graphics, and profound appeal.



Despite his curious attire, Spider-Man Noir is the ultimate Spidey here.

Spider-Man Shattered Dimensions

Does whatever four Spideys can

Info

SPIDER-MAN
SHATTERED DIMENSIONS

Format PS3 **Pub** Activision **Dev** Beenox **Price** $59.99 **Web** spidermandimensions.marvel.com **It's like** Swinging, baby!

It's a risky gambit, best attempted by one of Spidey's lesser foes (Big Wheel, perhaps?): Instead of doing one thing really well, try creating four similar but separate things and hope the parts are better than the whole. In the case of *Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions,* however, the four different Web-heads combine to offer up a game that's neither better nor less than the whole, but exactly equal. In other words, one part is near brilliant, two are pretty good, and one is utterly awful, averaging out to a wholly decent but somewhat uninspired experience.

The conceit here is pure camp, signaled from the start by Stan Lee's distinctive narration—a delightfully gravelly voice delivering plentiful puns and abundant alliteration with profuse panache. A mystical tablet is shattered and the pieces are sent off to four dimensions, in which we find the original Amazing Spidey, the gritty Noir version, the futuristic 2099 persona, and the Ultimate wallcrawler. In a dozen lengthy levels, the four different Spideys square off against different foes whose powers have been enhanced by the tablet fragment. All the arachnids share the same basic controls, but each has a different gameplay mechanic and distinct visuals.

Solid Spider

The best wallcrawler by far? Spider-Man Noir. Dark and brutal, the Noir levels all happen at night, with this particular Spidey lurking in the shadows and performing stealth takedowns. It's unlike anything we've played in a Spider-Man game, using Spidey's wall-crawling and web-swinging in refreshing new ways—and it works brilliantly. As Spidey Noir, we leapt from lamppost to lamppost, shimmied on the ceilings, and skulked around, finding the best vantage points to dispatch our foes. The actual takedowns are all triggered with a simple press of the Circle button, but the animations vary depending on our position, and they all happen with a satisfying thud. Even after dispatching dozens and dozens of goons, these takedowns never got old. As we pushed further into these levels, the challenge ramped up, with the final

Influences The many dimensions of Shattered Dimensions

SILLY STRING

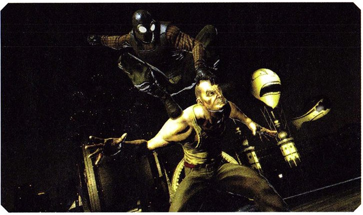
Silly String

Cosplay

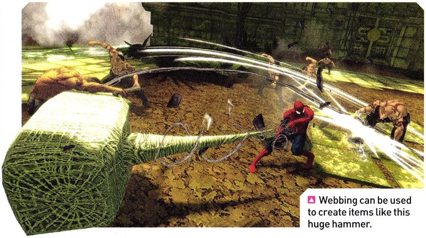
Gymkata

Every Spidey game

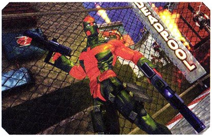
Spiders



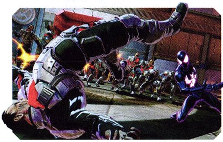
Spider-Man Noir works in the shadows, taking down foes stealthily like a certain guy from a certain comic book who does certain bad things to certain bad guys.



Webbing can be used to create items like this huge hammer.



Guns don't kill people. Deadpool kills people, oftentimes with guns.



Noir level taking place in a twisted amusement park with fireworks lighting the night sky, exposing our hero to deadly, unavoidable gunfire.

Our next fave: the Ultimate edition. Thanks to the black suit, this Spidey has his own rage mode, perfect for those superhero power fantasies. Fill a meter and turn rage on, then beat the stuffing out of everything. It's also got the funnest traditional Spidey level: starring Deadpool, the self-aware mutant hater who lures Spidey to an offshore rig and stages a reality TV show complete with killer fanboys and bullet-spewing cameras. The mix of combat and clambering here is just tops.

Amazing Spider-Man, on the other hand, plays it totally safe by delivering exactly what we've come to expect from a Spider-Man game and no more. Its best new addition to the gameplay comes in the showdown with Sandman, in which our villain sends up sandstorms with swirling debris, creating a moving playground for our hero to clamber across. Otherwise, this is standard stuff, solidly executed, but utterly forgettable.

Future Shock

But the worse levels by far: 2099. Some unfiltered selections from our notes: "Spazzy. Too bright. Annoying. Little visual clarity, hard to decipher what's going on. Eyesore. Garish and gaudy. Who the f–k is shooting at me? Too much happening; none of it fun."

Indeed, the 2099 levels highlight everything that's wrong with the game. All of the levels are huge, taking as long as an hour to finish. But here, the levels outstay their welcome early on, forcing us to slog through wave after wave of enemies in oddly colored cityscapes designed to hurt our eyes. And since the levels here are more frenetic (this Spidey can briefly slow time), it also showcases the flaws of the combat system, with its unstoppable combos that send us hurtling off into nothingness.

But even these spectacularly awful levels can't ruin what's otherwise one of the most interesting Spider-Man games in recent history. It's flawed, yes, but at its best it's entertaining and offers us some intriguing new ways to spin and swing our web. **GARY STEINMAN**

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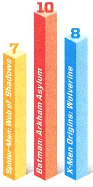
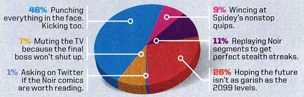


ScorePole

Batman might have the best superhero game, but at least Spidey is consistent.

What you do in... Shattered Dimensions



Never bring a gun to a howitzer fight.

Mafia II

Crime plays in Empire Bay

Three things we consistently did in *Mafia II:* Close doors behind us. Drive within the speed limit. And drink beer.

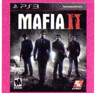
None of this might seem particularly surprising. After all, *Mafia II* delivers exactly what its title promises—a game about a small-time crook's rise within the ranks of La Cosa Nostra. But here's the thing: Not one of these activities affected the outcome of the game, nor any of its missions. There was never a reason for us to shut a door; no one lurked in the shadows ready to steal our hard-stolen possessions or to take us out after we invariably pissed off any one of the three major families during our time in Empire Bay. And obeying the speed limit? It seemed like a good idea at first, but the cops barely noticed whenever we turned off the in-game speed-limiter and whizzed by. (We got *one* speeding ticket in the game, and it was a marginal fine.) Finally, that beer: No health properties, no lasting effect—but sometimes after a nerve-jangling mission, we couldn't help ourselves. Back safely in our home, we'd wander to the fridge, pull out a cold one, then guzzle it down before heading to bed.

Such is the power of *Mafia II*. The story is so well told that it got us to do things completely unnecessary because we *wanted to believe*. We wanted to fully embrace the role of Vito Scaletta, and we were eager to act in a way that seemed fitting for our likable sociopath.

When in Rome

But therein also lies the problem with *Mafia II*. Despite being set in an immense, gorgeously detailed city, this is *not* an open-world game. Instead, it's an unapologetically linear third-person shooter/brawler/driver. Yes, the cover-based combat is surprisingly solid, the fisticuffs are fun, and the driving is excellent, but *Mafia II* doesn't quite fulfill its promise. At various times the game set us free to explore Empire Bay, but aside from stealing

Info



Format PS3 **Pub** 2K Games **Dev** 2K Czech **Price** $59.99 **Web** mafia2game.com **It's like** An interactive *Godfather* marathon on a lazy Sunday afternoon.

Bay Watch How we wasted our lives in Empire Bay

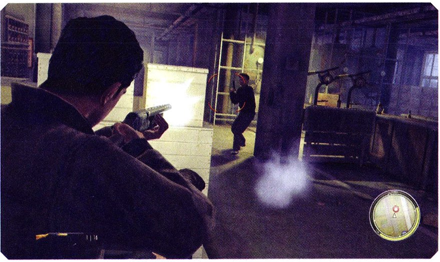
18:34:49
Total time we spent killing and thieving

2:01:52
Cowering behind cover

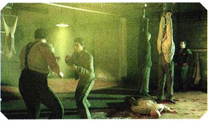
00:24:04
Running from the cops

00:04:50
Picking locks to steal cars

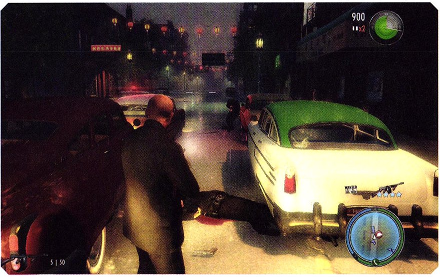
00:12:06
"Reading" Playboy articles



▲ Vito almost always drives, but sometimes he gets to call "Shotgun!"



▼ The PS3 exclusive "Betrayal of Jimmy" DLC adds a few hours of arcadey fun in Empire Bay.



cars, there wasn't much else to do. Even amassing a garage full of favorite rides had little consequence, since many of the driving missions curiously put us into a specific vehicle that wasn't one of ours.

But ultimately, *Mafia II* isn't about us. It's about Vito's story—an homage to every great mob movie ever made. It constantly borders on the cliché, but the superb voice acting and cinematic cutscenes rescue the game from seeming too familiar. What *does* feel overly familiar is the structure: for every chapter: There's an opening cinema, then a series of gameplay events that at times feels reluctantly placed there to merely conclude our day. The various moments—whether gameplay or cinema—are largely memorable, sometimes brilliant, and often just plain fun, but they fall short of a truly transcendent experience. It's still a very good game—well worth playing right now—but we suspect *Mafia II* will only fulfill its potential with all the DLC that'll inevitably populate Empire Bay. **GARY STEINMAN**

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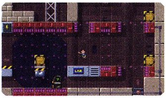
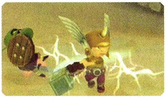
Minis Roundup

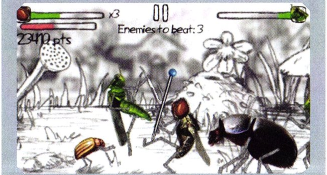


Taking the phrase "skate or die" to new extremes, the decision to shred straight into a mad scientist's underground lair leads to some crazy platform puzzling in **Archibald's Adventures.** Wielding a skate deck, bubblegum, and a pimped out maintenance pod to navigate 190-plus mutant- and trap-filled levels is sick. **BUY**

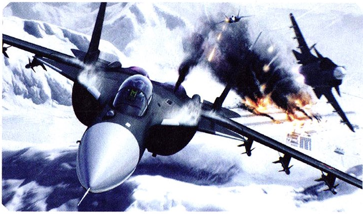


Young Thor may be a cute little dude carrying a big hammer, but the diminutive god of lightning packs a big punch. This platforming brawler is packed with power upgrades, RPG-style leveling, and unruly critters to battle during a quest to save Yggdrasil (the tree that binds together Asgard, Midgard, and Niflheim). **BUY**

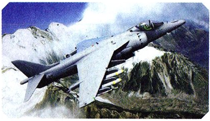
Mini of the Month



Photorealistic dead bugs and hand-scrawled doodles blend strangely well in this bizarre side-scrolling brawler. The kidnapping of his moth girlfriend by carapaced thugs spurs the larva-laying protagonist on a rampage of flying fists and decimated bug corpses in **Fly Fu.** Realistic kung-fu moves and a berserk mode that lets players pummel opponents with a spray of slow-motion airborne limbs add to the insectoid brawling fun. **BUY**



Nice details add a layer of authenticity to *HAWX 2*, like chasing a Russian Su-47 and falling victim to its signature Cobra maneuver.



Tom Clancy's HAWX 2

Putting some stimulation in the simulation

Info

Format PS3 **Pub** Ubisoft **Dev** Ubisoft Bucharest **Price** $59.99 **Web** ubi.com **It's like** The love child of *Top Gun* and any of Clancy's non-Jack Ryan novels.

Minutes into *Tom Clancy's HAWX 2*, the storyline becomes all but unfathomable. Incredibly well funded and equipped insurgents/separatists/extremists are striking at U.S. interests but they're merely the pawns of ultra nationalist Russians who are really the pawns of... Well, it's never made quite clear, but we're willing to bet that Nazis and communists figure into this totalitarian tea party somehow.

Despite Tom Clancy's name on the box, any pretensions toward plot are moot. The point of *HAWX* is to pilot the world's most advanced combat aircraft and blow up bad guys and their stuff. It's a mission the game accomplishes by finding a comfortable danger zone between the dry realism of a simulation and the outright blast-fest of an arcade shooter. True, the formula is heavily skewed toward arcade-style play, but there's at least a nod toward realism to create the perception that flying technique and air combat tactics do matter.

The first *HAWX* game offered satisfying eye candy, but *HAWX 2* ups the presentation ante with higher-res satellite-sourced imagery and 3D-modeled surface elements so low-level flight no longer looks as if it's occurring over a sparsely populated photograph of the ground. Even better, dogfight kills aren't relegated to a mini-display in the corner. The game deftly keeps an enemy's demise in view—all the better to enjoy the myriad of new explosion effects.

There's a nice variety to the missions that primarily alternates between dogfights and ground attack, but with the occasional recon/spy/escort segment utilizing an unmanned airborne vehicle (UAV). Finishing the objectives requires a delicate focus balance between task completion and combat survival, which in turn requires an execution balance between flying and weapons system management. The game's control never gets in the way of this balancing act, but the throttle system is unduly finicky during the landing and refueling episodes. The system exhibits the surging tendency of a car accelerator rather than the smooth steady power flow of an aircraft's thrust lever, making for an irritating dance of micro-inputs during the delicate maneuvers.

If there's any other complaint, it's the occasional absurd battle scenario. We can't imagine any carrier group commander directing his ships into the narrow confines of a Norwegian fjord or a pilot flying into an underground bunker tunnel, although we still had fun just blowing things up. Maybe realism, like plot coherence, is overrated after all. **ROGER BURCHILL**

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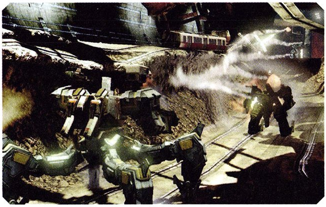
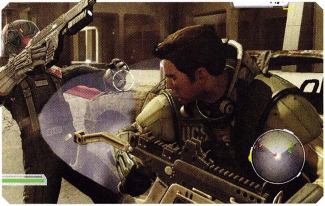
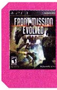
Front Mission Evolved

Less evolution than meh-volution



▲ *Evolved* sheds some of the *Front Mission* series' hardcore cred by trading strategy for an emphasis on straightforward action.





Info

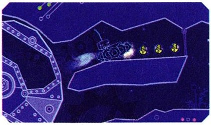
Format PS3 **Pub** Square Enix **Dev** Double Helix **Price** $59.99 **Web** square-enix.com/na **It's like** A 12-year-old mecha fanboy's idea of a gritty war story.

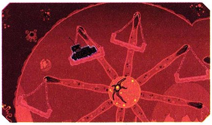
As with the strategy series that spawned it, *Front Mission Evolved* is set in a future where wars are fought with giant mecha called "wanzers." Unlike those games, *Evolved* is a third-person shooter following pilot Dylan Ramsey as he fights to avenge a terrorist attack.

Most of *Evolved* is spent piloting Dylan's customizable wanzer through sprawling (but linear) battlefields. These parts are standard mecha-shooter stuff with a thudding pace, an artificial sense of scale, and a constant need to upgrade to face increasingly tougher baddies. It's not particularly new or interesting, but it's adequately enjoyable. Only the on-foot sequences, in which Ramsey leaves the cockpit to gun down foes, including a few full-sized wanzers, serve to distinguish the game. The lack of sticky cover makes these segments feel antiquated, but they're still enjoyable. Fold in an uncomplicated multiplayer mode and lots of silly cutscenes awkwardly trying to tell a sentimental war story, and *Evolved* is pleasant, accessible junk food for mecha fans.

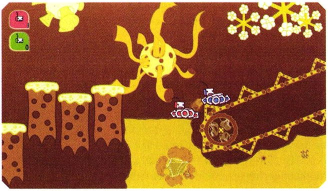
PlayStation 6

MIKEL REPARAZ





▲ This, truly, is the little engine that couldn't.



TerRover

A Demon's Souls in LocoRoco's clothing

Hey, we're all for playing as The Hero Least Likely, but this adorable little robot tank *is completely* ill-equipped to deal with the job at hand. *TerRover* uses an oh-so precious *PixelJunk* facade and masquerades as some lighthearted PSN effort. It isn't. This little physics puzzler quickly reveals itself it to be one of the most unforgiving games ever. Far more cruel than charming, the game presents us with levels wrought with spikes, spinning wheels, and craggy obstacles of pure unadulterated peril, then essentially gives us little more than a weighted balloon with traction-less Tonka truck wheels to surmount them.

Sure, it's meant to be difficult, but most games at least let us wade into abject frustration. *TerRover* skips this grace period altogether; even the unlockable upgrades do nothing to make the game more accessible, forgiving, or fun.

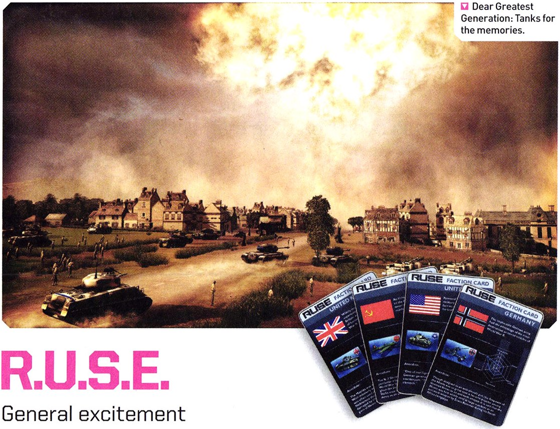
And that's the heart of the problem: *TerRover* lacks the tools and capabilities to tackle even the most basic obstacle without going 2 mph and then somersaulting backward. Ultimately, the game will be an agonizing, punishing slog for all but the most stubborn, masochistic players.

Most games reward players for exploring the maximum potential of their abilities; *TerRover* demands we enjoy it without offering any gratification at all. We love a challenge, but we can't begin to pretend this game is something for everybody. **CHRIS ANTISTA**

PlayStation 4

Info

Format PSN **Pub** Sony Online Ent. **Dev** Creat Studios **Price** $14.99 **Web** soe.com **It's like** An old-school side-scroller starring an eager paraplegic.



Dear Greatest Generation: Tanks for the memories.

R.U.S.E.

General excitement

They called the first World War the great war. This was in addition to calling it the war to end all wars. When World War II rolled around, no one bothered to suggest it was great. Now, years later, Ubisoft has stabbed at a great war on consoles, converting a well-liked PC genre—the real-time simulation cum strategy game—to the PlayStation 3.

Yes, real-time strategy: It's not the first thing that pops into gamers' heads when considering the PS3, but it might be going forward if more games like *R.U.S.E.* hit the streets. Traditionally found lingering around the basements of PC gamers, this new take on the seen-it-done-it World War II genre manages to go against the grain and brings some deep yet fun strategic gameplay to flat-panel TVs.

R.U.S.E. sports a number of different modes of play, with the meaty story campaign occupying some of the more infamous WWII hotspots. Played initially from the side of the Allied forces, *R.U.S.E.* gives players the ability to view truly massive battlefield maps in a highly accessible way. Alternating views between a tabletop *Risk*-style board and up-close-and-personal unit-based fighting proves refreshing and entertaining.

The game's name stems from its Ruse playing cards which grant some serious benefits in the form of tricky bluffs and misdirection. Split into three types, Ruses allow players to activate underhand tactics such as radio silence, reverse intelligence, spies, decoy attacks, and even utilize dummy headquarters in order to confuse, befuddle, and piss off the enemy.

Units vary from grunts with bazookas all the way up to the knee-tremble-inducing German King Tiger tanks. Properly deployed and implemented foot soldiers become lethal ambushers in woodland areas, while anti-tank guns prove to be hardcore at long range, and high-end prototype ordnance really manages to bring the pain.

Eugen Systems' IRISZOOM engine allows players to cover incredible distances by zooming in and out of maps at incredible speeds. This gives *R.U.S.E.* some of the biggest maps ever seen in a real-time strategy game. It's a mechanic that works extremely well and adds a new level of control to the large-scale battles.

Online action offers up to four-player wars or free-for-all skirmishes, while the Battles and Operations modes allow armchair generals to take a breather from the WWII campaign and rattle off rounds at a more leisurely pace. While the maps are nifty, *R.U.S.E.* isn't the prettiest game ever. But then no one's compared war to an artistic masterpiece. **ED KUZNARSKI**

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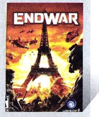
Like This? Play these

Command & Conquer: Red Alert 3

A three-way war between the Allies, Soviets, and Empire of the Rising Sun wrecks stuff good.

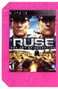
VERDICT 8



Tom Clancy's EndWar

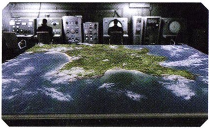
Voice control of combat units works suprisingly well here.

VERDICT 7

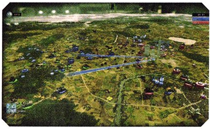


Info

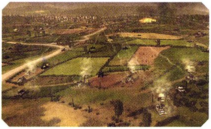
Format PS3 **Pub** Ubisoft
Dev Eugen Systems **Price** $59.99
Web ubi.com **It's like** Stopping the spread of fascism in the living room.



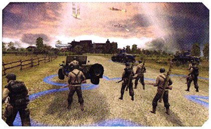
1 Survey the entire battlefield in tabletop view. Killing from this distance is easy!



2 Forces can be moved around in order to mass armies or form defensive lines.



3 Zoom in to watch combat units in exciting detail as they execute orders.



4 Get even closer to inhale the sour stink of fear and despair in the frontline troops.

Madden NFL 11

Putting the field general back on the field

Info
Format PS3 **Pub** EA Sports **Dev** EA Tiburon **Price** $59.99 **Web** easports.com **It's like** *Madden 10* + 1, but in half the time.

Everything gets better with Gus Johnson's commentary. Everything. That's not just a theory, it's a scientifically proven fact. By that standard alone, *Madden NFL 11* is the best of the 22-year-old *Madden* franchise. Johnson can make the average screen pass sound like the immaculate reception.

Somewhere along the line, *Madden* became even more complex than the game it simulates. Individual games lasted forever as players had to scroll through screen after screen of plays on every possession. Which is fine for those who want to be the next Bill Belichick; not so much for those who want to be the next Tom Brady.

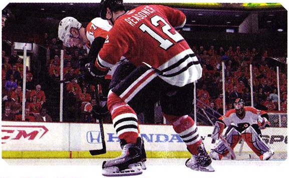
Enter GameFlow, *Madden 11*'s most welcome addition. Letting the CPU call plays means being more quarterback than coach, reducing options to a series of audibles or hot routes. It's possible to play an entire game (or an entire season for that matter) without calling or changing a play at all. This, however, is not recommended as at times it seems the CPU coordinator is drinking more than Gatorade up in the booth or even that he's watching a different game entirely. It's possible the more patently ridiculous calls (third-and-long, two minutes left, down 12 on the opponent's 20 is clearly not the time for a dive up the middle) are just a way of making sure audibles and hot routes get used. There's also a Game Planning option, which can be used to modify GameFlow to operate in a more sensible fashion.

Another new feature is the Madden Moments, which revisits classic moments (natch) from the 2009-10 season. The goal is to either duplicate the achievement or prevent it, depending on the specific moment. The "moment" may last a few seconds or an entire quarter, and require such Herculean feats as scoring a touchdown, reversing the outcome of the Super Bowl or, harder still, winning an actual NFL game as the Detroit Lions.

While much has been made of the improved graphics and gameplay—with good reason thanks to a whole new motion engine, more intuitive controls, the elimination of the exciting-but-not-very-realistic turbo button, and the AFL and Super Bowl options—it's online where *Madden 11* really shines. It's possible to play up to three-on-three while communicating via headsets with each player controlling a particular portion of the offense or defense. Calling the shots while Johnson calls the action? We call that football nirvana. **RUSS BENGTSON**

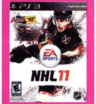
PlayStation 8

Stick shattering is now a regular occurence in *NHL 11.*



NHL 11

Stick. And move...



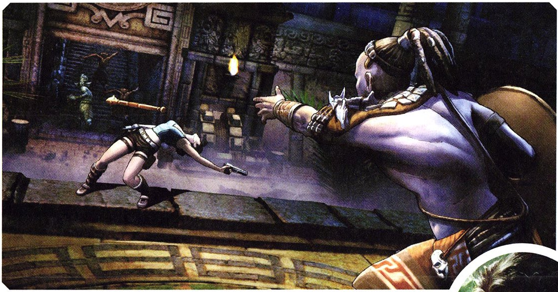
Info
Format PS3 **Pub** EA Sports **Dev** EA Canada **Price** $59.99 **Web** ea.com **It's like** Violence on ice.

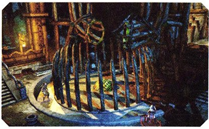
This latest revision of the *NHL* franchise sees some of the biggest changes yet, chiefly in the form of an all-new real-time physics system, breakable sticks, a slick new face-off engine, and the game's greatest draw: the monumentally deep Hockey Ultimate Team mode, which gives players the chance to live out their wildest trading card team-building dreams and craft their own ultimate lineup.

The real-time physics engine does an impressive job of serving up bone-crunching action and the PS3 delivers a solid framerate to match. Players can be driven back after big hits, and the puck reacts differently to surface variations in the ice. If someone's been floored on the ice, a player can now deftly jump over them rather than being blocked. Additionally, the new face-off system offers a much more satisfying level of puck-grabbing control in the circle over previous efforts. *NHL 11* also adds a new quick-deke system that, when mastered, is incredibly fun.

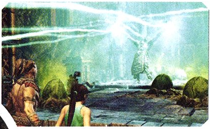
With *NHL 2K* sitting out this season, these details combine to make *NHL 11* the best—and only—videogame on ice. **ED KUZNARSKI**

PlayStation 8

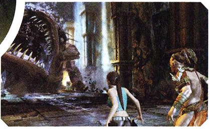




Giant balls rolling around in big, scary cages. Just another Saturday night for Lara Croft.



As far as angry gods go, Xolotl has an electrifying flair for the dramatic.



Sorry, gigantic mutant piranha thingie. Lara and Totec have much bigger fish to fry.

Lara Croft and the Guardian of Light

Because there's always a tomb to be raided

She's a charming one, that Lara Croft. Even stripped of her stature, shrunk down to a more serviceable size, our plucky spelunker retains her greatest assets. And no, we're not talking about her polygonal protuberances. (Those remain a darling distraction for the prurient players out there.) Instead, Lara has recaptured the sense of wonder that suffused her earlier adventures, giving us a short but sweet romp through a series of puzzle-laden levels.

In *Guardian of Light,* there are switches to be pulled, fire traps to be avoided, balls (both smooth and spiky) to be pushed around and lodged into suitably ball-shaped indentations. All of the puzzles in the game are crafted with Croftian logic, which is a kinder way of saying: "Who the heck builds these things?!" No matter, though: In the half-dozen hours spent saving humanity from an angry god who's intent on destroying the world because someone stole his *hand mirror,* Lara is treated to the kind of puzzles that delight the gamer by remaining perilously on the edge of solvability. Even at their toughest (and that includes the optional reward-based challenge rooms), each puzzle gives the feeling that the solution is just around the corner—if we could only figure out the right sequence of spike-tiles or master the timing of the bomb blasts or hit the proper target to switch the correct movable walkway...

Combat, on the other hand, is a mixed bag. In some ways, the simple twin-stick shooting and the top-down isometric perspective fixes much of what's plagued the series for decades. Instead of wiggly aiming in 3D, *this* Lara can point in one direction and shoot, and then things fall down. But the collection of enemies here range from endless onslaughts of annoying cannon fodder to molten-rock-hurling monstrosities and at times the number of beasties on screen can flummox even the best sharpshooters. The challenge later in the game is almost unbearable and it's not helped by the awkward control; dodging is necessary for survival, but it requires a vexing leap of the right thumb from the analog stick (for shooting) to the Square button (for dodging). The unlockable weapons help a lot, though, adding significant variety to the action and giving us ample reason to replay levels to find even better boomsticks.

Where Lara really stumbles, though, is in co-op. This game seems perfect for two players—one of whom controls the spear-wielding Totec—but the camera creates its own challenges, ungraciously pulling one player off ledges if another gets too far ahead. Worse: when the field gets crowded, it's often tough to decipher who's who, leading to unnecessary deaths. Worser: Those risky jumping sequences with both players leaping around to avoid rotating flame-spewing statuettes; in our sessions, one of us always seemed to get muddled up—causing both to try, try, and try again. (Or to walk away in sheer frustration.)

Despite her considerable charms, this Lara is best experienced alone.

GARY STEINMAN

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Cast List

THE HEROINE

Lara Croft
Archaeology goes awry whenever she heads underground.

THE WARRIOR

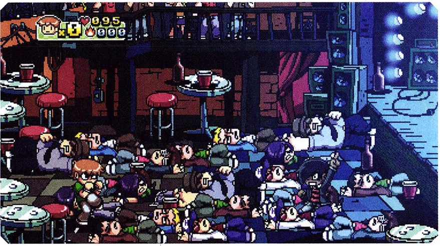
Totec
Locked in a battle with Xolotl that centers around *a mirror.*

THE ANGRY GOD

Xolotl
He's so vain, he probably thinks this game is about him.

Info

Format PSN **Pub** Eidos/Square Enix **Dev** Crystal Dynamics **Price** $14.99 **Web** eidos.com **It's like** Opening a treasure chest using a chesty treasure hunter.



▲ When it comes to clobbering hipsters, Scott knows how to bring the ruckus.

Scott Pilgrim vs. The World The Game

Kicking ass old-school

Info
Format PSN **Pub** Ubisoft
Dev Ubisoft Montreal **Price** $9.99
Web ubi.com **It's like** Living in some fanatastic comic book world where licensed game's *don't* suck.

Even for those who aren't well-versed in Bryan Lee O'Malley's excellent *Scott Pilgrim* graphic novel series, it doesn't take much effort to fall in love with the brilliantly retro style and ample nods to classic gaming nostalgia found in *Scott Pilgrim vs. The World: The Game.* This pixel art-infused, chiptune-laden side-scrolling brawler is loaded with awesome fan service from the comic series, but it also has enough charm to stand on its own.

Falling in love with a punk rocker named Ramona Flowers, young Scott Pilgrim has to clobber his way through hordes of unruly hipsters and oddball thugs across the 8-bit streets of Toronto en route to defeating her seven super-powered evil exes in order to date her. While that's a tall order, Pilgrim has a mean kung-fu grip and is up to the challenge. The old-school beat-'em-up gameplay is pure homage to *River City Ransom,* yet it has enough new twists to keep the familiar formula fresh. A cool RPG-style experience system unlocks new fighting moves with every new level earned and enemies drop Canadian coins that can be spent at shops to restore health and boost stats.

Pilgrim is designed for multiplayer cooperative pummeling with four pals sharing the same screen. This works quite well for the most part and lets everyone crammed onto the couch get in on the action simultaneously, but the lack of online play and drop-in co-op is a major bummer.

We found playing solo to be a ton of fun, even though the challenge is absolutely brutal when going it alone. Most enemies like to take their cheap shots when they can get them and it's too easy to be overrun by large roomfuls of thugs, camera-toting paparazzi, costumed dinosaurs, and other crazy baddies. Replaying a few of the same stages repeatedly to level grind and grow strong enough to push past the tougher stretches is a must in single-player mode. But don't fret: plowing through previously played stages is still satisfying.

The game makes up for any of its minor deficiencies with its unforgettable style and personality. All of the gorgeous pixel art is absolutely spot-on with the comic series, and the amazing soundtrack provided by chiptune rockers Anamanaguchi is infectious. Taken as a whole, *Scott Pilgrim* delivers a one-two punch in the nostalgia department and is a must-download experience. This is a licensed game done right. **NATHAN MEUNIER**

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DLC Roundup

War For Cybertron: Map and Character Pack

Price $9.99 **ESRB** Teen

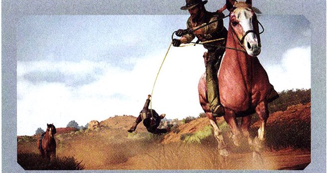
The war between the Decepticons and the Autobots rages on in two new combat maps and two escalation mode maps. Even better, this expansion unlocks five Transformer characters: Demolishor, Onslaught, Shockwave, Scattershot, and Jazz.

BioShock 2: Protector Trials

Price $4.99 **ESRB** Mature

This single-player challenge involves getting Little Sis to suck up ADAM while players protect her from an onslaught of nasty brutes. Each of the six arenas have three special weapons and plasmid loadouts to work with, with a fourth unlocked when the trials are completed.

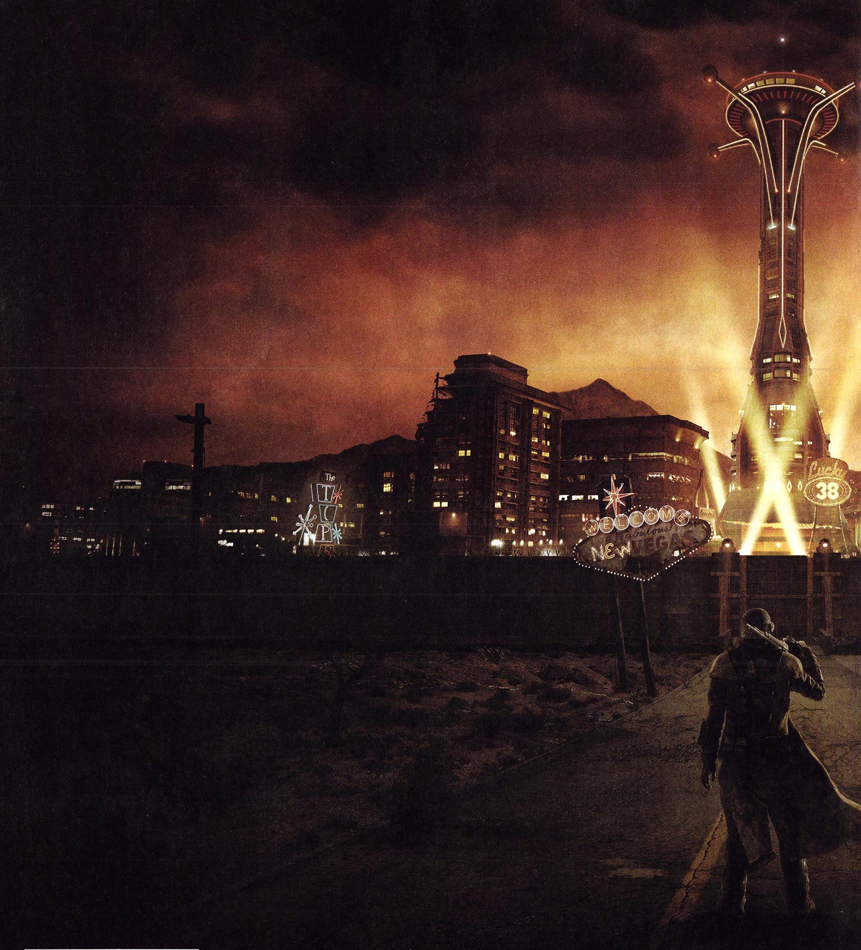
Download of the Month



Red Dead Redemption: Legends and Killers Pack

Price $9.99 **ESRB** Mature

Legends and Killers is a multiplayer-focused expansion that dishes out nine new maps to facilitate excessive gun-slaughter. It also dusts off classic playable characters from *Red Dead Revolver* to join the fray, including Annie Stoakes, Buffalo Soldier, Jack Swift, Red Harlow, Pig Josh, Ugly Chris, Mr. Kelly, and Shadow Wolf.



MATURE 17+ ™

M

Blood and Gore
Intense Violence
Sexual Content
Strong Language
Use of Drugs

ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

AVAILABLE 10.19.2010

Games for Windows XBOX 360. XBOX LIVE PS3 PlayStation 3 PlayStation Network

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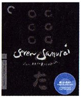
Seven Samurai

(The Criterion Collection)

As close to art as action gets

Info



Price: $49.95
Director Akira Kurosawa
Starring Toshiro Mifune, Takashi Shimura, Keiko Tsushima, Yukiko Shimazaki
Rated Not Rated
Extras Two audio commentaries, three documentaries, and a booklet of essays and articles on the film.

Of all Akira Kurosawa's incredible body of work, *Seven Samurai* will always be his most well known and beloved. American film fans are likely more familiar with the 1960 Hollywood remake, *The Magnificent Seven*—a vastly inferior, yet bizarrely loved western—and Disney's *A Bug's Life*, which is definitely the funniest retelling of the story. For those who haven't seen the original, take this advice: Correct the mistake with great haste by running, not walking, to buy this brilliant Blu-ray release. Criterion has taken the already superb DVD edition and trumped it on HD, and the result is a disc that should stand proudly on anyone's display shelf.

Ignoring all the film historian and critical hype, *Samurai* is an action film for the intelligent fan of Japanese cinema. The plot is simple: When brutal bandits besiege a village, the town gathers up a meager offering to hire warriors to defend them. As it happens, they find seven. What follows is a brilliant tale of human nature, military planning, and violent action.

Samurai is a long movie—clocking in at almost three-and-a-half hours—so it requires some time investment. The movie is also black-and-white, full screen, and (obviously) in Japanese with English subtitles. We imagine that to a lot of viewers, these are all negatives and they may even find the movie boring compared against the CG-filled, explosion-filled action flicks of today. Tough luck. Few modern movies (especially action movies) have any chance of being considered amongst the greatest movies ever made. *Samurai* does, and without it the cinema landscape would be a far more barren place.

For cinema lovers who want to delve deeper into the how and why of the film's greatness, Criterion has obliged with two scholarly commentary tracks, several worthy documentaries, an art and photo gallery, and a booklet of essays by critics and filmmakers. It might be difficult to explain to a youngster crowd why any movie before their time has relevance, but *Samurai* is a history lesson that's well worth taking for anyone with more than a casual or passing interest of the film medium. It's not merely an important film, but more fundamentally it's great entertainment that shouldn't be missed.

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JASON D'APRILE

Mother

A mother's love is weird but enduring

Info

Price: $29.98 **Director** Joon-ho Bong **Starring** Hye-ja Kim, Bin Won **Rated** R **Extras** An expansive full-length documentary, several making-of featurettes, international trailers.

Crazy, strange, tense, funny, utterly fascinating: All describe Korean director Joon-ho Bong's latest work, *Mother*. The director's previous film was the giant monster movie, *The Host*, which was a great horror film that almost fell flat thanks to its inability to smoothly integrate its often inappropriate humor with truly riveting suspense. *Mother* has none of these issues. The movie will make its viewers laugh, often uneasily, while simultaneously sustaining an amazing level of tension.

The story has a simple setup—an aging mother becomes obsessed with finding the true killer of a schoolgirl after her mentally disabled son is convicted of the crime. Her search leads her down a bizarre rabbit hole of the movie's small Korean town, and the entire film hinges on the amazing performance of Hye-ja Kim as the mother. She's a completely involved actress who makes her character feel absolutely real, even when she's engaged in behavior that (from a Western perspective) probably seems bizarre. *Mother* is filled with strangeness, though whether it's cultural or just plain weird is certainly open to discussion.

Asian weird aside, the actual plot is methodical and intelligent, with a satisfying ending giving the film a full-circle feeling of completion. The characters in *Mother* might not be particularly likeable, but the choices they make seem entirely human—for better or (more frequently) for worse.

There's a full-length documentary that's an added bonus for the disc. The 90-minute behind-the-camera look adds a lot of value to the experience and is well worth checking out. Even the shorter featurettes are quite good. All the extras, as well as the film itself, are in Korean with subtitled English. There's no annoyingly dubbed English-language version so the focus is on the sparse and moody audio and dialogue. This is a cultural trip, for sure. JD

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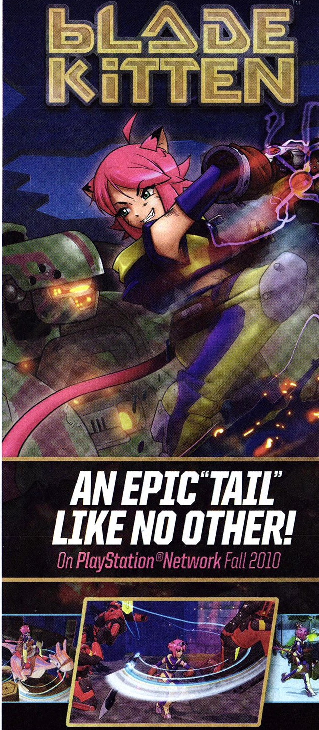

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Animated Blood
Fantasy Violence
Mild Suggestive Themes

ATARI www.atari.com KROME STUDIOS PlayStation® Network

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Want that

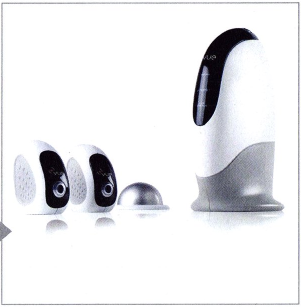
Lust-have stuff for PlayStation people

Parrot AR.Drone

When RC cars no longer cut it, try a quadricopter. This high flyer can be controlled over Wi-Fi with an iPhone, iPad, iPod Touch, or Android device. The kicker: It has a combat app that overlays missiles, lasers, and explosions over your display view.

$299

ardrone.parrot.com



Avaak Vue Personal Video Network

Avaak's Vue offers a sense of security. It includes two cameras and a base station to stream live video directly to a laptop, mobile device, or Facebook account.

$299

avaak.com

Star Wars AT-AT

All-Terrain Armored Transports never go out of style. This AT-AT comes with all manner of goodies including a driver, light-up guns, a speeder bike, and a healthy dose of nostalgia.

$99

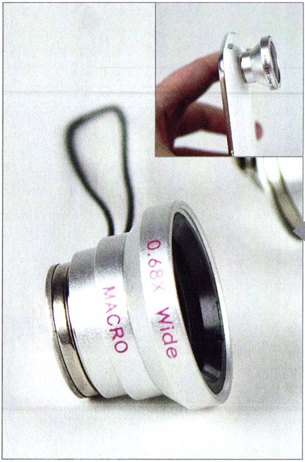
hasbro.com

Swiftpoint Mouse

This track-pad replacement fits on small surfaces, charges in minutes, can clip to the side of a laptop, and incorporates slick "tilt to scroll" functionality.

$69.99

americas.futuremouse.com



Photojojo Camera Phone Lenses

Expand your on-the-go photographic creativity with these add-on lenses. A magnetized ring makes for quick-and-easy installation to most any camera phone.

$20-$25

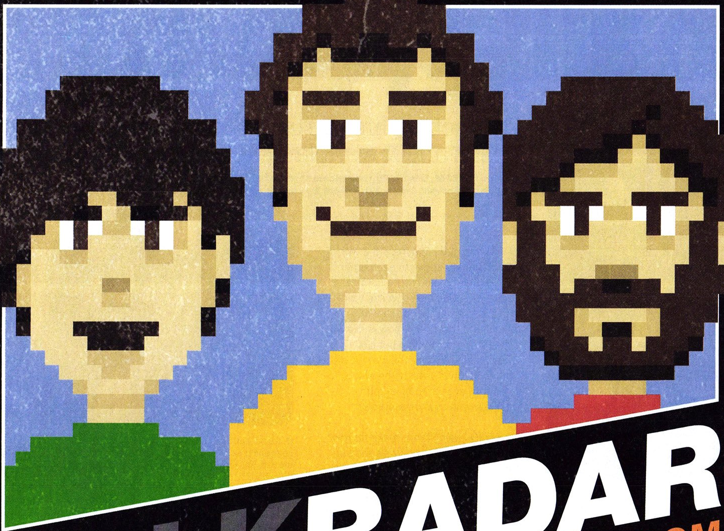
photojojo.com

Sony DR-GA500

These futuristic-looking cans incorporate 7.1-channel digital surround sound to bring games to life. The headphones even come with a boom mic for chatting and a "triple enfolding design" to keep them portable and comfortable.

TBD

sonystyle.com



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PlayStation 3
PlayStation Portable
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The Official Magazine
DEAD SPACE 2 VS. DEAD RISING 2
Reviewed Kingdom Hearts: Birth By Sleep
Revealed Warhammer 40K: Space Marine
WORLD-EXCLUSIVE HANDS-ON
STAR WARS
THE FORCE UNLEASHED II
Future

The Force was strong with this issue. And, of course, Boba Fett is still a big doofus.

The facts of life live on, and we all learn a valuable lesson about war. Namely, that it's not rated PG.

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Facts of (Online) Life

What I have gone through with online play has really disheartened me. I have been playing *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare* for about three months now, and if I've learned anything, it's the colorful way people across the world have chosen to speak to each other.

I have been called more names, ethnic slurs, and curse words than I can even remember or repeat. I understand that online play is the way of the future for gaming but it is disheartening to hear the way we all treat each other over the headsets and, sadly, even in messaging.

SCOTT CLEMENS | PARTS UNKNOWN

Anonymity and distance make for poor gaming partners, Scott. It's a sad but true fact of life. Just like Tootie. Muting people and playing exclusively with friends seem to be the best solutions. Barring that, the PTOM staff likes to strike back at angry, hate-filled rants by having a friend read excerpts from The Brothers Karamazov *or the* Poetic Edda *while we're playing.*

▲ Tootie took the good and took the bad. She took them both!

As a service to our readers, we'd love to put you and other like-minded players in touch with each other so you can have a riotous, fun-filled, and garbage-free series of play sessions. So if you're up for friendly competition without the nonsense, send us your PSN screen names and we'll see about pairing everyone up.

Letter of the Month

EVERYONE LOVES THE SACK

In the August issue (Issue #35) you guys had a preview of *LittleBigPlanet 2* where you talked about people using Sackboy's emotions for communication with children with disabilities. Reading this I automatically thought of my niece who has cerebral palsy, which slows brain growth. She is six and has trouble speaking, so I thought I would buy *LittleBigPlanet* and see if I could get her to try using the controls. She loves the little guy and I have found she loves to make Sackboy jump with joy. **TRAVIS HARPER, SOMEWHERE IN TEXAS**

Thanks for the note, Travis, and for the awesome picture of your niece with a tiger. We're not sure letting your neice frolic with a predator is wise, but for warming the cockles of our hearts when we possess neither cockles nor hearts we are awarding you our coveted Letter of the Month prize. It comes with many goodies for you and your niece, maybe a nice piece of meat for the tiger, and a swell box that's suitable for framing should you want to hang a cardboard box on your wall.

"A" List

I have a list for you, PTOM.

1. What happened to the Xbox bashing? You guys barely bash Xbox anymore. Also, why do you not bash Nintendo and PC gaming in your magazine?
2. Stop bashing Canada. Now. It's rude.
3. What happened to Teresa Dun?

ALEX JONATHAN | PARTS UNKNOWN

We don't bash other consoles because: 1) It's stupid and 2) We own Xboxes and Wiis and GameCubes and Dreamcasts. We heart other consoles, and we also love our plucky, can-do neighbor to the north, Canada. You guys make great ice for the hockey games we sometimes watch when there's no football (American, that is) on. Finally, Teresa "Over" Dun has gone on to a better

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place: A paying job where people don't poke her with pointy sticks all the time.

A Letter to Electronic Arts

What you guys do every year is difficult, I know. However, please give us a couple years of stat and roster updates so you can take some much needed time to polish your game. In the demo for *Madden 11*, I can tell you guys worked hard to improve some of the tech, but it still looks bad. The animations in this game are jerkier than a Lady Gaga video. As I watched Peyton Manning engage in an over-the-top celebration, I wondered if you guys even watch football. Or test your games. **GREG | INDIANAPOLIS, IN**

PTOM staff members have learned many lessons during their time on this loony balloon known as Earth: Don't whiz on an electric fence; if the mule don't kick, you know the mule don't ride; and if the intern won't eat it, you can bet it's not food. Another important lesson is that demos of unfinished games are just that—unfinished. Oh, and one last, but perhaps the most important, lesson: We're not Electronic Arts. Still, check out our review of Madden on p.83 of this issue for our thoughts on this year's incarnation.

In Rush We Trust

I love both the *Guitar Hero* and *Rock Band* franchises. When they started making band-specific games, I thought it was an amazing idea! Of all the bands that continue to be honored and immortalized, one band continues to get passed over. I'm talking about a band called Rush! Why do they continue to be passed over? All I'm saying is please, deny us Rush no longer! **ADAM VIPOND | ALEDO, IL**

We sent your letter to Harmonix and Activision, the people responsible for both Rock Band *and* Guitar Hero:

Rush is forever yours, faithfully.

"Thanks for being such a big fan of *Rock Band* and of the music game genre in general! We totally hear you—everyone has a favorite band they feel would be an ideal candidate for a standalone gaming title. While we can't fulfill every one of these requests, we do try to offer something for everyone, either via disc songs or through *Rock Band* downloadable content, which can allow us to include a broader selection of songs from an artist's catalog. For example, did you know that there are a whopping 13 *Rush* songs currently available for download to play in *Rock Band*, including 'XYZ,' 'Tom Sawyer,' 'The Trees,' and 'Working Man'? You can check them all out here: www.rockband.com/music/artists/Rush. We actually even have 'The Hockey Theme' by *Rush* drummer and lyricist Neil Peart! And if you don't see the song you want, you can always let us know what you'd like to play by submitting your song requests at www.rockband.com/request. Thanks for writing in, and keep on rockin'!"

—*Harmonix, maker of* Rock Band

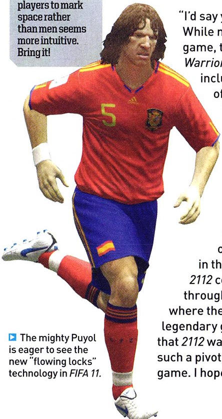
And Brian Bright, project director for Guitar Hero: Warriors of Rock, *chimed in:*

"I'd say you are in luck. While not a full *Rush* band game, the new *Guitar Hero: Warriors of Rock* has included all seven parts of Rush's *2112* suite. We created a unique set of three venues inspired by the story of *2112* and were fortunate enough to get the band to record [voice over] of the story, as told in the album liner notes. *2112* comes about halfway through the quest mode, where the Warriors find the legendary guitar. We thought that *2112* was a perfect fit for such a pivotal moment in the game. I hope you enjoy it!"

Ask KEN!

Q When it comes time to do the review of *FIFA Soccer 11*, how about letting Ken the art director do the review? I'm guessing he'd give it, oh...a 10? **CLINTON BISHOP**

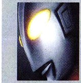
A Now that the World Cup is over, I do have a little spare time on my hands... But I am actually excited by the improved defensive controls that I saw. Switching players to mark space rather than men seems more intuitive. Bring it!



The mighty Puyol is eager to see the new "flowing locks" technology in *FIFA 11*.

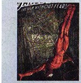
Et Cetera

All the other stuff that distracts PTOM



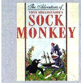
Ultraman: The Complete Series DVD set

"When I finally figured out that I couldn't grow up to become Ultraman, I vowed to fight evil in the only other way I knew how: by playing videogames." **ROGER BURCHILL**



Daredevil

"Not just any Daredevil collection, but the first omnibus volume of Brian Bendis and Alex Maleev's spectacular run, which reaffirmed my love for the Man Without Fear." **GARY STEINMAN**



Sock Monkey

"The delightful adventures of a sock monkey and his alcoholic crow pal play out here. It's like a trip back to my childhood, minus the explosions." **GREG ORLANDO**

Cults

"The season may be over now, but this remains the perfect summer soundtrack. Download the group's free self-titled 7-inch at cults.bandcamp.com!" **SCOTT BUTTERWORTH**

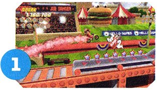
Un Gaffe

PTOM (Issue #37) reported there were 3 million PSN users. That figure is waaay incorrect; there are roughly 50 million. We regret the error.

PSN
Best Games

It's the best of the best! Get the lowdown on this month's PSN goodies you can't live without

BEST FULL GAMES



1

Platforming Puzzle Racer

Joe Danger

A mix of *ExciteBike*-style racing and insane stunt-driven platforming action, this vibrant indie gem shines brightly among the best PSN offerings available. Getting dangerous has never been this awesome.

9
Pub **Hello Games**
Dev **Hello Games**

2

Futuristic Racing

WipEout HD

As with any good remix, *WipEout HD* cannibalizes the best aspects of the high-speed, high-octane, high-risk-and-reward futuristic racing series in order to create one hell of a wild high-def ride.

9
Pub **SCEA**
Dev **SCE Liverpool**

3

Multiplayer RTS

Fat Princess

Cake-fueled multiplayer mayhem is where this deceptively cute but brutal battler carries its weight. Force-feeding sweets to immobilize an enemy's princess may not be PC, but it's super fun.

8
Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Titan Studios**

4

Zen Exploration

Flower

Artsy or not, this gorgeous concept game makes blowing hordes of fluttering petals around a lush natural environment into an unforgettable experience that holds up against the biggest AAA offerings.

9
Pub **SCEA**
Dev **thatgamecompany**

5

Puzzle Shooter

PixelJunk Shooter

The fourth entry in the *PixelJunk* series is easily the best of the bunch (though we still adore *Monsters*). Saving trapped mining colonists with a puzzle-solving environmental ship is a creative and challenging affair.

9
Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Q-Games**

BEST DEMOS

1

First-Person Shooter

Modern Warfare 2 Cliffhanger

Climbing icy cliffs, stealthily infiltrating an enemy base, and then high-tailing it to safety on a snowmobile makes this exhilarating slice of *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2* absolutely delicious.

Pub **Activision**
Dev **Infinity Ward**

2

Turn-based Action

Valkyria Chronicles II

The engaging tactical turn-based action combat series hits the PSP, and this demo gives a nice glimpse of just how smooth the game's transition from its PS3 predecessor has gone.

Pub **Sega**
Dev **Sega**

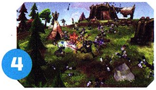
3

Retro Platformer

Earthworm Jim HD

The creepy crawly hero of gaming's glorious 16-bit past returns in this slick HD remake of the original tire-bouncing, cow-launching hit. Get ready for a dose of annelid action.

Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Gameloft Inc.**



4

Action RPG

DeathSpank

Dispensing "justice" is so much more enjoyable when it involves gathering the severed lips of vicious chickens. This hilarious demo offers a primer on *DeathSpank*'s sheer hack-'n'-slash wackiness.

Pub **Electronic Arts**
Dev **Hothead Games**

5

Adventure

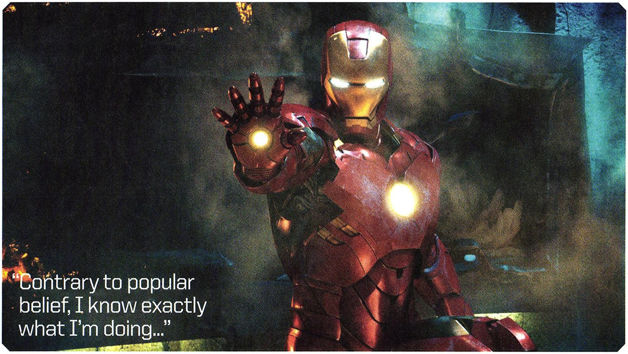
Mafia II

A chump that doesn't jibe with the mob is one dead chump. Fill the streets full of lead and bodies in this bloody romp through Empire Bay. It's a downloadable offer not easily refused. Capice?

Pub **2K Games**
Dev **2K Czech**

PSN Video Delivery Service Spotlight

What we're watching on our PS3 this month



"Contrary to popular belief, I know exactly what I'm doing..."

Iron Man 2

ETA **September 28** Rated **PG-13** Genre **Action** Studio **Marvel Studios/Paramount Pictures**

Looking back now, it all started so promisingly: *Iron Man 2* kicked off the 2010 summer movie season with a bang as Robert Downey Jr.'s Tony Stark battled his own mortality while facing off against Mickey Rourke's deliciously sinister whip-wielding Ivan Vanko. Speaking of delicious, Scarlett Johansson made S.H.I.E.L.D. operative Natasha Romanoff's debut a memorable one—mainly by being Scarlett Johansson. Considering the anemic slate of action "blockbusters" the rest of the summer provided, revisiting Shellhead seems the perfect way to close out the season and begin the healing process necessitated by the likes of *The Last Airbender*. Save us, Tony...again.

Top VDS Downloads

Movies

Date Night
Kick-Ass
Clash of the Titans
Diary of a Wimpy Kid
Death at a Funeral

TV Shows

Naruto Shippuden Uncut: Season 1
The Boondocks: Season 3
Jersey Shore: Season Miami
Futurama: Latest Season
Family Guy: Season 8

BEST FREE STUFF

1

First-Person Shooter

Brink Developer Diary

This developer diary shines some light on the setting and different factions found in *Brink* and gives an early glimpse at the chaos set to unfold in this stylish post-apocalyptic shooter.

Pub **Bethesda Softworks**
Dev **Splash Damage**

2

Flight Combat

Top Gun Wallpaper

Fire up the afterburners and lock on target, it's time to get all "Highway to the Danger Zone" with this sweet *Top Gun* wallpaper. It's proof positive that F-14s are sexier than Tom Cruise and Kelly McGillis.

Pub **Paramount Digital Ent.**
Dev **Paramount Digital Ent.**

3

Action RTS

Fat Princess: Wallpaper 5

Bathe your PS3's background in the glorious images of gluttonous pink pirates and combat-ready ninjas with this latest adorable free wallpaper installment for *Fat Princess.* It's not just fat, it's phat.

Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Titan Studios**

4

Sandbox Western

Red Dead Redemption Film

Fans of gun-slinging Western action, ample blood splatter, and scenic desert vistas will want to check out this slick 30-minute film made entirely from footage from the *Red Dead Redemption* game.

Pub **Rockstar Games**
Dev **Rockstar San Diego**

5

Action MMO

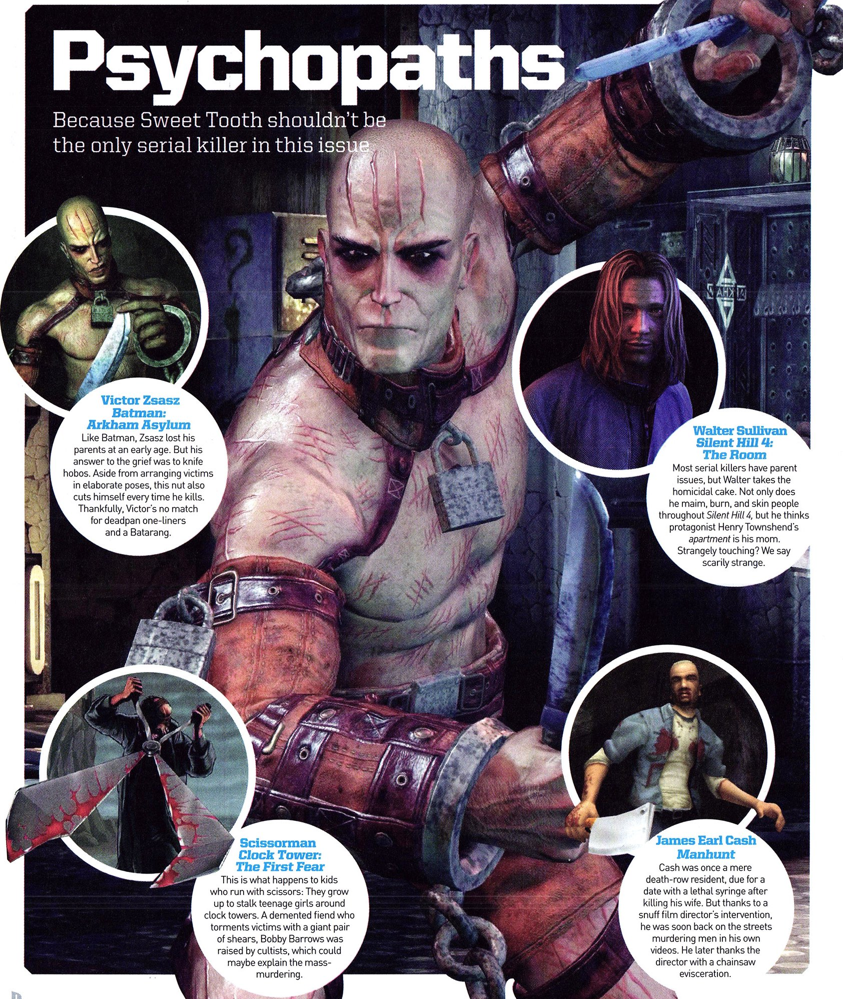
DC Universe Online Trailer

Holy superhero armageddon, Batman! This explosive cinematic CG teaser offers a heavy dose of supercharged action and whets our appetite for the forthcoming spandex-clad MMO.

Pub **SOE**
Dev **SOE Austin**

Psychopaths

Because Sweet Tooth shouldn't be the only serial killer in this issue



Victor Zsasz
Batman: Arkham Asylum

Like Batman, Zsasz lost his parents at an early age. But his answer to the grief was to knife hobos. Aside from arranging victims in elaborate poses, this nut also cuts himself every time he kills. Thankfully, Victor's no match for deadpan one-liners and a Batarang.

Walter Sullivan
Silent Hill 4: The Room

Most serial killers have parent issues, but Walter takes the homicidal cake. Not only does he maim, burn, and skin people throughout *Silent Hill 4,* but he thinks protagonist Henry Townshend's *apartment* is his mom. Strangely touching? We say scarily strange.

Scissorman
Clock Tower: The First Fear

This is what happens to kids who run with scissors: They grow up to stalk teenage girls around clock towers. A demented fiend who torments victims with a giant pair of shears, Bobby Barrows was raised by cultists, which could maybe explain the mass-murdering.

James Earl Cash
Manhunt

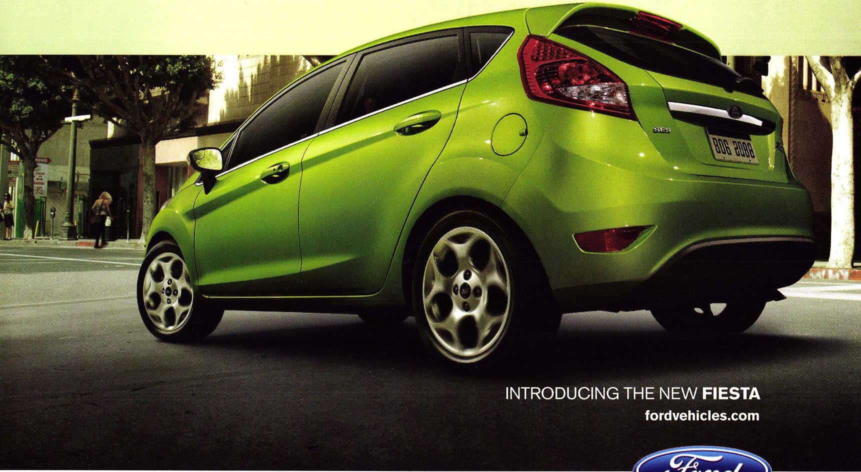
Cash was once a mere death-row resident, due for a date with a lethal syringe after killing his wife. But thanks to a snuff film director's intervention, he was soon back on the streets murdering men in his own videos. He later thanks the director with a chainsaw evisceration.

THE FIESTA HAS ENOUGH NEW-WORLD TECHNOLOGY TO PUT A 50-GRAND CAR TO SHAME.

ENGINE
START
STOP

There's a lot you can get in a Fiesta. A class-exclusive 4" multifunctional LCD display,* standard. A PowerShift six-speed automatic transmission.** That's the kind of engineering that makes it more responsive and still keeps it fuel-efficient.† The Fiesta also has available keyless entry, push-button start, voice-activated SYNC®†† and even ambient lighting. All told, that's as much high-end technology as many premium cars. How's that for high tech?

IT'S A PRETTY BIG DEAL.



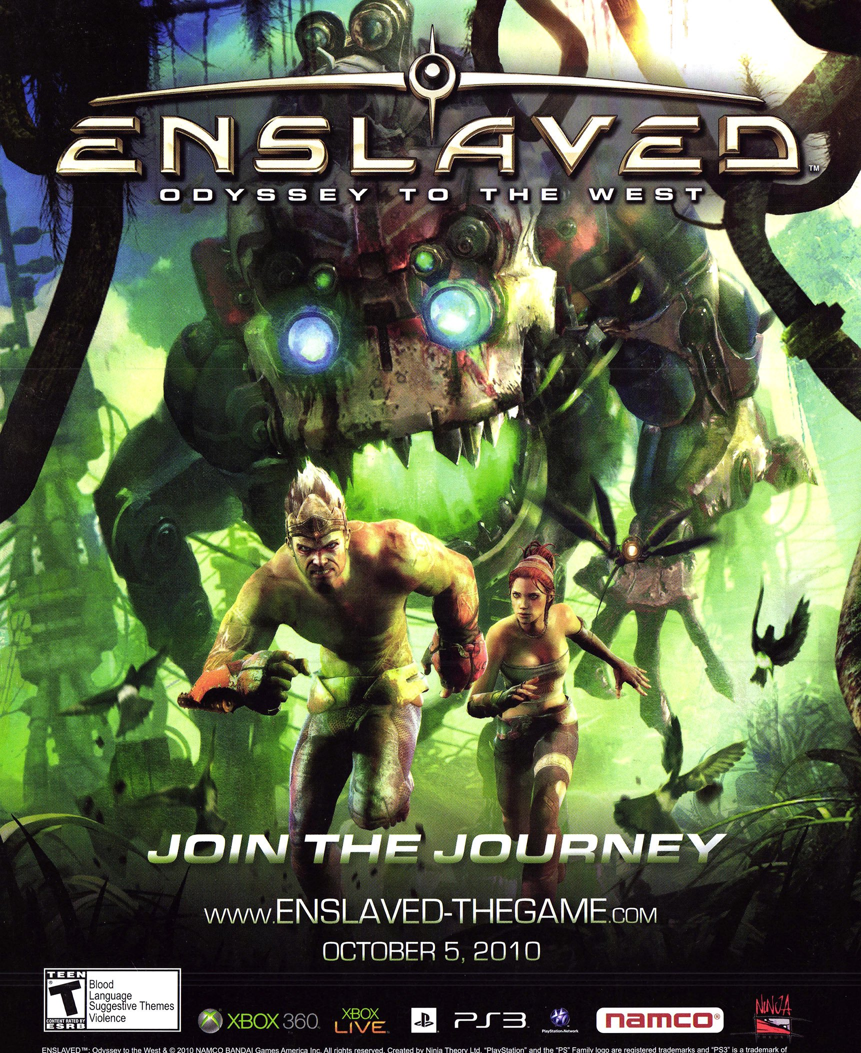
INTRODUCING THE NEW **FIESTA**

fordvehicles.com

Ford

Drive one.

*Class is Compact Cars vs. 2010 competitors. **Optional. †Fiesta SES shown. EPA-estimated 29 city/38 hwy/33 combined mpg, automatic. ††Driving while distracted can result in loss of vehicle control. Only use mobile phones and other devices, even with voice commands, when it is safe to do so.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